GUARDIAN WEEKLY
May 26 1996

Motor Racing Monaco Grand Prix

It's Panis in the streets

Richard Williams
in Monte Carlo

ONLY three cars were left running at the end of Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix, and not one of them was driven by Damon Hill or Michael Schumacher. Run on wet roads and punctuated by frequent incidents, the race produced a first victory for Olivier Panis, who thus ended a 15-year drought for the Ligier team and became the first Frenchman to win this almost-French race in a French car since René Dreyfus in a Bugatti in 1930.

Second was David Coulthard's McLaren-Mercedes, only five seconds behind the Ligier-Mugen when the race was stopped after reaching the two-hour limit, with Johnny Herbert's Sauber-Ford half a minute further back in third. Heinz-Harald Frentzen's Sauber, Mika Salo's Tyrrell, Mika Hakkinen's McLaren and Eddie Irvine's Ferrari filled the remaining four positions, having covered sufficient distance to be classified as finishers, but all of them had stopped before the chequered flag came out.

Panis is a 29-year-old Grenoblois whose talent has been evident since he arrived in Formula One two seasons ago. He started the race from 14th position on the grid and deserved his win, although inevitably he relied to some extent on the misfortunes of others — notably Hill, who was in complete command when his engine blew just after half-distance.

Hill's path, in turn, had been cleared when he made a better start on the wet track than Schumacher. Clearly annoyed at himself for wasting the advantage of pole position, the world champion made a bad misjudgment less than a minute into the race, clouting the barrier at the downhill right-hander after the old Station Hairpin.

Seizing the opportunity as the world champion began to walk back to the pits, Hill pulled quickly away from the Benettons of Jean Alesi and Gerhard Berger. Behind them a degree of carnage spectacular even by Monaco's standards removed more than a third of the 21-car field within the first five laps. Three cars failed even to get round the first corner.

But Panis was already catching the eye. While others were simply trying to avoid the guard rails, he went past Brundle, Hakkinen and Herbert in the space of 15 laps — all the more remarkable since his car was heavy with a full tank of petrol, a risky strategy aimed at saving time by using his pit stops only to change tyres.

Meanwhile, Berger retired with a broken gearbox, giving third place to Irvine, who was holding up a queue of nine cars covered by less than eight seconds with a display of obduracy that eventually degenerated into sheer pig-headedness. Frentzen was the first to lose patience, breaking his front wing against Irvine's rear wheels at Ste-Devote.

By the time Hill headed for the pits after 28 laps he had built up a 23-second lead over Alesi, allowing him to resume only just behind the Frenchman. Within two laps the Williams, now fitted with slick tyres to suit the drying track, had repassed the Benetton and was drawing away again.

Panis was the chief beneficiary of the pit-stop sequence, leaving ahead of Coulthard to take fourth place, only to find that it was his turn to be blocked by Irvine. The blue of the marshals' warning flags suddenly seemed to have taken on a distinctly French tint, but Irvine remained insensible to their urgency. Panis, who could sense a good finish in the offing, decided not to wait. Coming down to the Station Hairpin he ran down the inside of the Ferrari, nudging it into the barriers.

Irvine limped back to the pits and had his nose section changed. But before the Ferrari could wreak further damage, Hill's majestic progress had come to an end. On the 40th lap the red oil-pressure light winked a warning. Halfway through the tunnel the next time round, a cloud of smoke deprived him of certain victory in the race his father won five times. So ended the Williams team's six-race winning streak and a run of 16 victories for the Renault V10 engine. As he climbed out, Hill clasped his gloves to his helmet in despair.

For the next 20 laps Alesi looked like redeeming a terrible start to his first season with Benetton, and was comfortably keeping ahead of Panis when his rear suspension failed. Thereafter Panis, Coulthard and Herbert needed only to steer clear of danger.



Flat out . . . Olivier Panis finds some space in the streets of Monte Carlo to grab victory PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MARSH

Cryptic crossword by Fidello

Across

1 Jewish half gain three-quarters credit (7)
5 Pretender creates a miracle (7)
9 Great lake follows a habitat (5)
10 Those winning do not score it (9)
11 A ley sheep gambolling, deputy leader is one nodding off (10)
12 Sort of glass, round and pale practically (4)
14 Forces accommodation? (7,4)
18 Are radius lines (ten) and circle becoming slow? (11)
21 Not strong play on words, Andy (4)
22 Consolatory items at the Olympics? (10)
25 He maintains reserve in public relations (9)
26 Wise gift of first person runs by right hand (5)
27 He makes a sound on another ranch (7)
28 Sweetheart's inclination metal gold, Miss Rigby (7)

Down

1 Not many succeeded to break down a sentence (6)
2 Exchange German coin and French (6)
3 The Press stare strangely at the uninvited (10)
4 Nationality of the last character in the churches (5)
5 The caucus majority from the continent are white (9)
6 How the seaman acts (4)
7 As is Shakespeare's Twelfth Night (7)
8 Country football ruled Italy possibly (8)
13 Message from Graeme of Roma translated (10)
15 Dogged saviour (9)
16 Basis for "Views on Expressionism"? (3,5)
17 Discoverers hold long fragments (8)
19 Excluding but concerning name lacking fruit (6)
20 Non-productive sort of elements, say (6)
23 Anti-Gaelic lines? (5)
24 Rustic feature denoting the past transatlantic season? (4)

Last week's solution

Golf Benson & Hedges International

Ames swinging in the rain

David Davies

A COLLECTIVE collapse of the great and the good in golf allowed Stephen Ames, 60th on the Volvo Order of Merit, to win the Benson and Hedges International at The Oxfordshire on Sunday.

Colin Montgomerie took 84, Ian Woosnam took 82, Nick Faldo took 80. Ames, the best player to emerge from Trinidad and Tobago, took 72, the best of the day, holing a 12ft putt on the 18th to beat Essex's Jon Robson by a shot.

Ames finished five under par on 283, Derrick Cooper was third on 285 and the only other players under par after a week of abysmal weather were Ross Drummond and Andrew Coltart, both on 278.

Ames won £116,660, which was a great deal more than he had won previously in a full season and took him to second in the Order of Merit. This is his second tournament win, but as the other was the Lyons Open, with less than a full field, this is by far his greatest achievement. Robson took away £77,770, also more than he won in any previous season.

There was some simmering resentment, not to mention anger, as the overnight leaders trailed off the course badly beaten.

Woosnam hurtled away with barely a glance at a gathered press corps, and Montgomerie, who had been penalised two shots for angrily kicking the sand in a bunker, was barely capable of speech. Nick Faldo said: "It was hit and hope out there, we were not in control and it was bloody tough. It was not golfing weather. It may have been playable but it was very severe."

In such wet and windy conditions Ames's birthplace did not make him an obvious contender, but he has a slow swing and very good balance, and he maintained his rhythm almost throughout.

He was two under par for 16 holes, easily the best of the day, when he pushed a one-iron into the lake at the 17th. Satisfied it was the right club and the correct tactic, he cleared the water at the next attempt and although he took a double-bogey seven he came to the 18th needing a par to beat Robson.

His second, from 209 yards, was a two-iron that finished 80ft from the hole. His first putt left him with a 12-footer for the win and the uppercut that followed the ball into the hole was understandable. "I double-bogeyed the 2nd," he said later, "and that woke me up. I realised they were not going to stop it so I'd better get on with playing."

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The Washington Post Le Monde

Yeltsin profits from Chechen ceasefire

David Hearst in Moscow

BORIS YELTSIN pulled off the biggest stunt of his presidential election campaign on Monday by signing a ceasefire deal with the Chechen rebel leader, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.

A day of high drama, which started with the bizarre spectacle of Mr Yandarbiyev and his armed bodyguards being taken on a presidential plane to Moscow, ended with a triumphant declaration.

"We have resolved the key problem of peace in Chechenia. This is an historic day, an historic moment," President Yeltsin declared after two hours of talks.

The deal, signed by Mr Yandarbiyev and the Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, commits both sides to "end military activity" in Chechenia from midnight on June 1.

Two previous ceasefire declarations in the 18 months of fighting have failed to stop a war that has cost more than 40,000 lives and humiliated the Russian army. But this could well be the decisive moment of Mr Yeltsin's campaign — finally calling a halt to the most unpopular act of his presidency, the sending of Russian troops into Chechenia.

The limited terms of the deal leave open the future status of the breakaway republic and the question of who leads it — the rebels or the present Moscow-backed government of Doku Zavgayev, who is a bitter rival of Mr Yandarbiyev.

Mr Yandarbiyev, a fervent Chechen separatist, ruled out talks on the Chechen claim to independence by saying: "We don't have a problem of status. We have a problem of settling mutual relations."

Mr Yeltsin, however, keen to build on the boost to his election prospects offered by the peace deal, visited breakaway Chechenia on Tuesday and declared that the region remained a part of Russia.

Interfax news agency said the president planned to meet Chechen citizens and Russian soldiers during his visit and would deliver a major speech on his vision of a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

"The talks were difficult but were crowned with a success," Itar-Tass news agency quoted Mr Yeltsin as saying. He was speaking at the Russian military base of Mozdok, outside Chechenia.

"We should demonstrate that the Chechen Republic is in Russia and nowhere else," he said.

The peace agreement provides for an exchange of prisoners within two weeks. Few other details were released, which left Mr Yeltsin's main opponents, the Communist Party, floundering. The news of the accord drowned out the publication of the Communists' economic programme, and forced Valentin Kuptsov, one of the party's leaders, into a statement welcoming the initiative.

Mr Zavgayev, who leads the Moscow-backed Chechen government, attended the talks. The rebels, who had in the past refused to meet him, agreed to view him as a member of the Russian delegation.

The Russian military remained distrustful to the end. The defence minister, General Pavel Grachev, denied splits with Mr Yeltsin and said: "There is nobody who can formulate the position better than our own president who said bandits, murderers and professional mercenaries must be incapacitated."

But one "bandit" was this week accorded red carpet treatment by the Russian president, who received Mr Yandarbiyev and his delegation of five in the Kremlin banquet hall.

After the deal, the delegation, most of them still wearing camouflage jackets, though having left their weapons at the airport, were due to be taken to a secret KGB residence in Moscow.

However, Chechen rivalries mean there is a high risk of the deal falling apart in the months to come.

Washington Post, page 15



NLD chairman Aung Shwe, right, with Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon this week PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD VOGEL

Burma's democrats defy military clampdown

Deborah Charles in Rangoon

BURMA'S military rulers launched a personal attack on Aung San Suu Kyi this week as her National League for Democracy wound up a three-day congress against the backdrop of mass detentions.

The ruling military body, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc), attacked Ms Suu Kyi and the NLD in the official media after holding a public rally on Monday to denounce "destructionist forces" in Burma.

The government attacked Ms Suu Kyi, the NLD leader and Nobel peace prize winner, for allowing herself to be a "puppet of the colonialist groups", calling her an "enemy of the people" and a "traitor".

The NLD defied government intimidation and the detention of more than 250 pro-democracy politicians by holding a three-day party congress at Ms Suu Kyi's lakeside home. About 10,000 people flocked to the gates of her house on Sunday to underscore their support for the NLD.

The government countered with its own public rally in Rangoon on Monday, where 40,000 people chanted slogans and denounced "the traitors' acts to destabilise the country and to spoil progress", official media reported.

The military often forces citizens to attend government-sponsored public rallies, according to diplomats and opposition sources.

The congress ended on Tuesday with the party adopting a series of resolutions that are likely to infuriate the military government. Ms Suu Kyi said the party's leadership would draw up a new draft constitution for Burma, ignoring a government-sponsored constitutional convention from which the NLD withdrew last November.

At least 258 NLD members, including 238 representatives elected in a 1990 election, were arrested by the army last week.

The Slorc has denied arresting the NLD members, saying it has only detained them for questioning to avoid "anarchy" that could result from the congress.

The NLD, co-founded by Ms Suu Kyi in 1988, won a general election in May 1990, with more than 80 per cent of the seats. Although the Slorc called the election, it never recognised the results and did not allow the NLD to take office. —*Reuter*

Comment, page 12

Britain puts block on EU decisions

Geoff Meade and Michael White

BRITISH ministers blocked a dozen European Union decisions in Brussels on Tuesday in the biggest offensive so far against Europe over beef, following John Major's decision last week to end co-operation with Britain's EU partners.

Roger Freeman, minister for deregulation, vetoed four proposals, including measures Britain has been demanding to ease the bureaucracy hampering small businesses.

Meanwhile the UK's overseas development minister, Baroness Chalker, wielded the axe on eight measures involving closer co-operation and co-ordination of EU efforts to support Third World development.

British officials admitted that the block on moves to cut red tape was a blow, because Mr Freeman had personally campaigned around Europe for an end to unnecessary legislation which adds costs to smaller medium-sized firms and hinders their competitive edge.

But the fight over Europe's ban on the export of British beef takes precedence at the moment, and there were no apologies from ministers for carrying out the Prime Minister's instructions and putting a break on progress.

Meanwhile John Redwood turned up the pressure on Mr Major not to retreat on his insistence that Britain must get a deal to resolve the beef crisis before ministers drop their policy of non co-operation with the European Union.

The former Tory leadership challenger's latest intervention came as UK ministers met to organise means of increasing the rate at which up to a million older cattle are slaughtered in the next 12 months in order to convince consumers across the EU that BSE will be eradicated from British herds. Ministers are anxious that the EU realises the scale of what is being done to cull BSE-tainted herds and older cattle.

In return they want gradual re-acceptance of herds with no history of BSE and of grass-fed herds.

Like many Eurosceptics Mr Redwood sees the beef crisis as an opportunity to restore the EU to the free trade common market it originally was — and find an election-winning theme. This is an analysis which enrages pro-European Tory MPs like George Walden, who this week threatened to resign the whip if the row gets out of hand.

On Monday Mr Redwood stirred the pot when he urged ministers to make good their promise to table proposals on fishing, beef, the European Court powers and subsidiarity.

War on Europe, page 10
Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	45c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Nothing clever about small-minded men

JEAN PHILIPPE RUSHTON'S conclusion that "It's a trade-off: more brain or more penis. You can't have everything" (Men who think they're so clever, May 19), seems to sum it all up. These men (and it appears to be all men) must suffer extreme inferiority at the size of their penises, and try to make up for it by claiming to be so much better endowed in the brains department — a highly questionable thesis.

It would be interesting to know their theories on women's intelligence. As the people who make up more than half the world's population are not mentioned once, do we assume this supposed superiority/inferiority of intelligence applies only to men? Based on the types of theories the "race scientists" put forward, I suppose it's more likely that they rate women so inferior they're just not worth talking about.

I don't know if Murray *et al* are "the most dangerous men in America", but they certainly do nothing to help race relations, and I hope they aren't taken seriously by the 400,000-plus people who consider it worth spending money to buy their books.

Diana Quick,
New York City, USA

PROFESSOR JENSEN is cited in your debate as saying that Affirmative Action produces "the accountant who cannot calculate or the surgeon who has not learned anatomy". One can only be astounded. Here in Canada, accountants as well as physicians and surgeons must pass rather demanding qualifying examinations before being admitted to practice. I had not been aware that Affirmative Action had done away with such examinations in the United States.

Jordan Bishop,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

DESPITE their high IQs, The men who think they're so clever have a lot to learn.

Regardless of whether different peoples share similar IQs or not, all deserve respect and fair treatment — whether black or white, female or male. We have no right to discriminate against blacks or to oppress females.

What matters in life is the quality of one's thoughts, words and deeds. None of which require, or are guaranteed by, a high IQ. Basically, a lot of high-IQ people run their lives at least as stupidly as low-IQ people.

Julie Stapleton,
Amagasaki-shi, Hyogo, Japan

GARY YOUNGE'S out of context quotation of David Hume's views on negroes does nothing to serve his arguments. In trivialising Hume, it shows all the worst trends of "new historicism", where non-specialists sift through writings of long dead white males to prove they were racist, sexist or both. Inevitably finding damning quotations, these scholars, or, in Younge's case, journalists, then yelp "Gotcha!" Don't get me wrong, I have some sympathies with Younge and am sceptical about the Bell Curve thesis — but to counter it in mature debate, he would do well to adopt arguments worthy of Hume's intellectual rigour.

(Dr) Mark Stocker,
University of Canterbury,
Christchurch, New Zealand

Hostage tragedy in Irian Jaya

THE RECENT murders of two Indonesian hostages by members of the Free Papua Movement (OPM) was a terrible tragedy, not just for the victims, but also for the West Papuan people (Nine hostages freed in Irian Jaya jungle, May 26).

For more then 30 years they have been subjected to an occupation by Indonesia which has stolen their land, attempted to destroy their culture and killed up to 200,000 people (including five members of OPM leader Kelly Kwalik's family in October 1994).

The Indonesians have a record of brutality and murder in West Papua, East Timor and elsewhere. There is a great danger now that human rights abuses will escalate in the area over the next few months. Instead of using the situation as an opportunity to tell the world of their sufferings, the hostage killers have given the Indonesian army the opportunity to pose as victorious liberators while they set about committing further atrocities unreported by the world's media.

John Saltford,
Manchester

THE Indonesians took over Irian Jaya, then Dutch New Guinea, when they forcibly expelled the Dutch in 1948. They have, since then, followed the Dutch example by imposing a military-colonial regime on this distant province, using it as backblock from which to crudely extract cheap raw materials, not least timber.

Irian Jaya's native Papuans have no non-Papuan language with which to communicate with the world, while the Dutch, far from sympathetic, prefer to forget their own blood-and-money rule. The Papuans have no say in the enterprises established to exploit their homeland — they do not profit from the minerals or the hardwoods sold to the West.

What were the British hostages doing in Irian Jaya in the first place, and what was their research designed to facilitate?

The Papuans, in the murder of the two Indonesian/Javans, did not act in any dark, whimsical brutality. Oppressed and isolated, they are perfectly sensitive to the political and economic horror being practised upon them, and what they did was a desperate but wholly political act.

Leo Schulz,
London

Labour ahead by degrees

TO SAY Labour is set to end "free degrees" (May 26) is to ignore the inadequacies of the current system, which fails students completely. As seminar sizes are growing and teacher contact time drops, so the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals is being forced by Government underfunding to think about introducing top-up fees.

Meanwhile, students are facing unprecedented levels of hardship, and are becoming increasingly dependent on parental support. The average debt at the time of graduation is now £2,500.

The Government's Student Loans Company has been a disaster, with unfair repayment terms and gross maladministration — privatisation plans had to be scrapped because the banks had the sense not to touch it with a barge pole. And a recent report by the General Municipal and Boilermakers Union showed that one in three students is missing lectures due to part-time work.

The National Union of Students recognised the failures of the current system when it voted three to one in favour of a change in funding policy at this Easter's conference. Education funding policy should deliver greater access to education, and end hardship — principles the Tories have completely failed on, which is why it's time for a change. Full credit to Labour for addressing the real needs of students.

Matthew Doyle,
University of East Anglia, Norwich

THE LABOUR leadership's new line on higher education is expediency at the expense of serious political thought. Instead of trying to divert more resources into this vital sector it is asking the system to feed on itself.

The traditional self-serving argument for the huge graduate earnings differential is "I worked for it at university". New Labour's plans will add to the froth of conceit: "I've got to pay off my education costs." The rest is predictable. By staffing the entire state apparatus — and the manufacture of policy at Westminster — graduates already have their collective hand in the till. Upon the inherent benefits of a university education will now be heaped yet greater privilege, hallowed by even more bogus justification.

Instead of enabling the spectacular growth in student numbers to continue, self-funding will entrench our deepest divisions. Already a marker of class, a degree will replace the 11-plus as a means of mass exclusion.

Tom Snow,
London

A boy's happiness

I DOUBT that Diane Taylor's account (Apartheid's son, May 19) represents the "truth" of this sorry tale. To start analysing this story in terms of the legacy of apartheid is to numb ourselves to the reality — and trauma — of Sifiso's life as it is today.

The truth of the matter is that Mr and Mrs Mahlangu acted irresponsibly in sending him away at the age of four. And Mrs Stopford acted with mischievous self-indulgence in taking him away and unbelievable arrogance in trying to adopt him behind his parents' back.

If Mrs Stopford loves Sifiso, she will move back to South Africa and do everything possible to reconcile herself with his parents: if they love him, they will allow this reconciliation. But he is not anyone's property, which is how everyone involved implicitly viewed him.

Felicity Laurence,
Durchhausen, Germany

DIANE TAYLOR'S article about Sifiso is a classic example of white western capitalist presumption. The Home Office clearly believes that white and modern is so much better and attractive than black and backward.

C A Moody,
Randwick, NSW, Australia

Briefly

IN HIS review of Islam And The Myth Of Confrontation (May 5), William Dalrymple persuasively argues that the Islamic menace is indeed largely mythical, a figment of Western prejudice. However, he misses an important point. Much Western anxiety stems not from Muslims alone, but from the fundamentalists of all three of those religions that have visited so much bloodshed on the world over two millennia.

These zealots seem once again in the ascendancy, threatening reason and accommodation in a way not seen this century.

James Kingsland,
New York City, USA

MOST articles that mention Cuba of recent times make reference to the shooting down of the two aircrafts in February (US boycott policy angers its allies, May 19).

Would the US have tolerated three planes who were warned in the morning only to return in the afternoon, as happened on February 24? Do you think the Western powers would be outraged if the US had responded to violations of its sovereign airspace by shooting down two aircrafts? Do you imagine a special meeting of the UN Security Council would have been convened?

John Wheeler,
Taupo, New Zealand

CONCERNING the obituary for Dzhokhar Dudayev (May 5) I would like to caution David Hearst on his colourful but sometimes rather arbitrary description of Dudayev's life and character, to help to distinguish between what he can justify as fact and what he has gleaned from the current political wisdom in Moscow. President of Chechenia through a "falsified election"? Who says so, on what basis of fact? Sharing responsibility for the deaths of 40,000 civilians? In what proportion to that of the Russian generals who ordered these indiscriminate bombardments?

Theodore Van Vliet,
Schopfheim, Germany

I AGREE with your leader (May 13), that the Vietnamese refugees should be treated humanely. Hong Kong Chinese racism is shockingly deep-seated. They view the Vietnamese as inferior, lazy, greedy and vicious. In one of the most affluent cities in the world, does the cost of supporting the Vietnamese create such a severe deficit that the refugees should be kicked out?

Britain, which declared Hong Kong as a first-asylum port, and the US, which created a mess in Vietnam, should shoulder most of the blame for the current problem.

Kin-ming Liu,
Hong Kong

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Letters to the Editor and other editorial correspondence to: The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London, EC1M 3HQ.
Fax: 44-171-242-0985 (UK: 0171-242 0985)
e-mail: weekly@guardian.co.uk

US intent on toppling Karadzic

Ian Traynor in Bonn

THE United States last week stepped up the pressure to topple Radovan Karadzic, the hardline Bosnian Serb leader and indicted war criminal, in an attempt to keep the Balkan peace process on schedule and prevent a potential débâcle interfering with President Bill Clinton's re-election chances.

John Kornblum, the US envoy to former Yugoslavia, followed up several days of telephone negotiations by going to Belgrade to seek the help of President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia in effecting Mr Karadzic's removal.

The US state department said Mr Kornblum's aim was "to make sure that all of them understand, from our point of view, the importance of civilian implementation of the [US-brokered] Dayton peace accords."

Mr Kornblum's mission followed the failure last month of Carl Bildt, the European official in charge of overseeing civilian aspects of the Dayton accords, to secure Mr Karadzic's removal.

Central to the Dayton deal is the provision for free elections in Bosnia in September, although all the evidence suggests that the battered country is far from ready to stage a free and fair ballot.

German sources active in Bosnia said the Clinton administration's paramount aim was to make sure the elections took place on time to prevent any fiasco that could impinge on the US presidential poll in November.

The Americans want the elections held in September, although European officials working in Bosnia are less than sanguine at that prospect. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, responsible for organising the poll, has still not committed itself to a date.

"The last thing Clinton wants is a poll postponement," said a German source. "The US is putting huge pressure on the Europeans and they will probably have to say OK or start another row with the Americans. But the problems are immense. There is no funding, the media freedom is miserable."

The most likely outcome of an autumn poll in Bosnia will be to replicate the result of the first post-communist elections held in 1990 which helped set the country on course for war: a triumph for three nationalist parties representing the Serbs, Muslims, and Croats.

Mr Karadzic is the biggest, but not the only, obstacle to a fair election as the Dayton deal bars him from holding elected office. He is fiercely resisting the international pressure to go and has humiliated Mr Bildt, who boasted that he had won assurances that the hardline nationalist was throwing in the towel.

By contrast, Mr Karadzic engineered the sacking of a rival moderate as the prime minister of his Bosnian Serb Republic, replaced him with a hardline ally, and had another nationalist named to liaise with the international powers.

The US appears to be moving in to flex muscles and bang heads where the Europeans failed. Mr Kornblum's ace card in attempting to get Mr Milosevic to help is diplomatic recognition. Unlike the European Union countries which have afforded Mr Milosevic's rump Yugoslavia recognition in the past couple of months, the US is holding back.

● The British prime minister, John Major, promised on a lightning trip to Bosnia last week that Mr Karadzic would be apprehended.

Martin Woollacott, page 12

Islamists see opening as Ciller quits coalition

Chris Nuttall in Ankara

TURKEY'S True Path leader, Tansu Ciller, last week announced her party's withdrawal from the 11-week-old government it shared with the rival centre-right Motherland party, opening the way to power for a pro-Islamic movement that could shake the secular republic to its foundations.

"We are withdrawing our support from the coalition, but our ministers will continue to take part in the cabinet until a new government is formed," Mrs Ciller said. "There is an urgent need for a majority government and True Path will accept a coalition formula which would provide this for the country," she added — a hint she may seek an alliance with the Islamic Welfare party.

She said her party was withdrawing from the government because of a constitutional court decision which ruled that a parliamentary vote of confidence in the government was invalid. The minority coalition could not serve for the benefit of the country, she said.

True Path and Motherland were forced into an unhappy partnership by the secular establishment to deny power to Welfare. The Islamic party narrowly won a general election last December but their efforts to form a coalition government were shunned by the other, pro-Western, parties.

But Welfare has exploited differences between the former prime minister, Mrs Ciller, and her successor, Mesut Yilmaz, and the public perception that the parties are corrupt. It opened a crack in the coalition in April with a vote to launch an inquiry into allegations that Mrs Ciller and associates had manipulated the awarding of contracts by the state electricity company.

Mr Yilmaz did not tell his MPs to vote against the investigation or against a second inquiry into his rival's handling of the sale of government shares in a car manufacturer, Tofas, while in power. The final blow was a complaint, upheld by the constitutional court, that the original vote of confidence won by the government was invalid because — with members of a leftwing party abstaining — it failed to achieve a clear majority of MPs present.

Last week, Mrs Ciller attacked the current prime minister in a speech to True Path members, saying: "The nation will bring down this sleazeball." Mr Yilmaz claimed she was panicking about allegations that she had misspent $6.5 million from a slush fund before she left office.

In the past Mrs Ciller has categorically dismissed the idea of an alliance with the Islamists. But a coalition with Welfare could ensure the inquiries against her do not reach the supreme court



Gun control . . . A French Special Forces soldier checks a mutineer in the Central African Republic unloading his weapon. French troops ended a mutiny by escorting disaffected army soldiers back to barracks following a nine-day revolt PHOTOGRAPH: FRANÇOIS MORI

Neutral Europe helped Nazis hide war loot

Martin Walker in Washington

THE declassification by the United States National Archives of thousands of previously secret documents is throwing up accusations that companies and financial institutions in neutral European countries worked hand in hand with the Nazis to hide the looted millions.

The material is providing the first serious confirmation that Nazi leaders and German industrialists conspired in late-1944 to shift gold and other assets to Switzerland to finance the post-war revival of a Nazi-led German empire.

The International Red Cross, leading Swiss and Swedish banks and corporations, and the family of the Swedish diplomatic hero Raoul Wallenberg, who helped save up to 20,000 Hungarian Jews, are accused in the documents of enthusiastic co-operation with the Nazis.

Among those named are the Swiss banks Credit Suisse and Union Bank, and the shoe company Bally, which is accused of taking over Jewish companies seized by the Nazis.

Among the most tantalising of the documents is one from 1944 that recounts a secret meeting in Strasbourg at which Nazi leaders told German industrialists the war was lost and ordered the businessmen to finance an underground network aimed at restoring the party to power.

Stunned researchers from the World Jewish Congress, looking for evidence to buttress their case for the restitution of looted Jewish property, have found themselves stumbling over documents that can destroy reputations, imperil fortunes and jeopardise international relations.

"It is incredible, astounding. Every day we are getting extraordinary material that has just been sitting there in the archives," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

There are claims that the Red Cross helped Nazi officials smuggle their ill-gotten gains across the border into Switzerland in diplomatic pouches. The Enskilda bank, run by the Wallenberg family, is said to have helped finance German industry without collateral, and to have acted as a money-laundering network to conceal German investments in US industries.

The documents, some of them obtained by US and British intelligence officials in 1945, and some part of the vast cache of Nazi and German military records which were microfilmed by the American archivists, also record the enthusiastic co-operation of British and American intelligence teams in gathering the information.

"By 1945, there is no doubt that the US and British governments had a very clear picture of the real co-operation of the Swiss and Swedes with the Nazis, and knew also how much Nazi loot was still in Swiss banks," Mr Steinberg said.

What the Allies did with that information is the question which disturbs Mr Steinberg, as he looks at US state department documents that list Nazi gold worth $402 million (at 1945 prices) being shipped to Switzerland.

Troops force Kashmiris to ballot box

Suzanne Goldenberg in Srinagar

BEATEN and herded like cattle, Kashmiris were driven from their homes at daybreak on Thursday last week to cast their votes for the first time in seven years, in an exercise stripped of any pretence of choice or freedom.

In village after village in Anantnag and Baramula, where voting for two of four parliamentary seats took place, the Indian army made little attempt to conceal its coercive campaign to ensure a high turnout.

The main Kashmiri political party, the National Conference, and separatist organisations had boycotted the polls, arguing that they did not address the real demand of the six-year uprising against New Delhi's rule: a negotiated settlement on Kashmir's future.

There had been fears that separatist guerrillas would disrupt the polls but, apart from small, scattered blasts and a few demonstrations, voting was free of violence.

The state election commissioner, Jalil Ahmed Khan, estimated the turnout at 43 per cent for Anantnag and 35 per cent for Baramula. "It has been the most smooth conduct of polling we could have asked for," he said.

However, his figures reveal little of the misery that was inflicted on the average voter. Even in Kashmir, where it is accepted that all but one of the elections since independence nearly 50 years ago have been rigged, last week's vote set a new low.

The charade started soon after dawn. In the village of Marwal, men walked to the polls in groups of about 100, spaced at intervals of a few yards. They said the army had used the village mosque's loudhailer to order them to be at the polling station by the time voting started.

"They told us we had to get out by 7.05am or they would beat us," one man said. After walking about a mile in the wrong direction, the men were in despair, but finally figured out where the polling station was. "But we don't know any of the candidates."

A couple of miles down the road at Nehama, soldiers forced villagers to display their fingers at a checkpoint, looking for the indelible blue ink that would prove they had cast their vote.

Inside the polling station at the local school, soldiers clubbed villagers into line with bamboo staves, and several old men fell into the mud. The troops told villagers it would be unwise to spoil their ballot papers.

At some villages, men were forced on to lorries and unloaded at the polling station; at others, troops with bamboo staves hurried them along the road. There were soldiers everywhere. "A certain degree of giving confidence to people is necessary," a colonel said.

● The Indian prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, facing almost certain defeat over a confidence motion in parliament, said on Tuesday he was going to hand in his resignation to the president. The leader of the country's first Hindu nationalist government took office after his party won the largest number of seats in elections held last month.

The Week

BANGLADESH'S president, Abdur Rahman Biswas, appeared to have brought the army high command under his control after about 5,000 activists of the largest political party, the Awami League, marched through central Dhaka demanding his resignation.

THE Vatican announced it had asked the United States legal authorities to destroy a tape of a confession made to a Roman Catholic priest by Conan Hale, a suspect in a triple murder case, held in an Oregon jail.

VIETNAM has stopped issuing visas to independent travellers between June 10 and June 30, when the Communist Party congress is due to be held.

DIVERS recovered 158 bodies from the sunken Tanzanian ferry Bukoba in Lake Victoria. Rescue workers said the final toll could be more than 1,000.

PRESIDENT Ronald Venetian defeated the former military dictator, Desi Bouterse, in Surinam's general election but fell short of an outright victory.

CHURCH bells tolled across France on Sunday as the country mourned seven Trappist monks murdered by Algerian Muslim fundamentalist guerrillas.
Le Monde, page 19

SHEIKH Ahmed Yassin, the jailed founder of the militant Islamic group Hamas, has called on his followers to suspend attacks against Israel until peace talks between Israel and the PLO end, a Hamas official said.

CHINA has released the only senior official jailed for the 1989 pro-democracy protests. But Bao Tong, aged 63, was placed under virtual house arrest in a retreat near Beijing.

PRESIDENT Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine sacked the prime minister Yevhen Marchuk. A presidential decree blamed him for Ukraine's growing economic crisis and said his duties would now be those of an MP.

THE centre-right emerged victorious in parliamentary elections in Cyprus, with the communists boosting their position as the second biggest party.

A CONTROVERSIAL flat-rate income tax could be in force in Washington DC by the end of the year as a daring experiment to turn the bankrupt capital of the US into a low-tax, fast-growth "Hong Kong on the Potomac".

THE emir of the Gulf state of Qatar, Sheikh Hamed al Thani, is to sue his father, the former emir Sheik Khalifa, for the return of some $12 billion of state assets.



Arms and the man . . . An Orthodox Jew begging for alms for a religious group and an Israeli soldier go their separate ways in Jerusalem as Israel prepares to vote this week PHOTO: YANNIS BEHRAKIS

NZ poll is leap into unknown

Mark Trevelyan in Wellington

NEW Zealand's prime minister, Jim Bolger, fired the first shots of a marathon election campaign, announcing the country would go to the polls on October 12.

The country of 3.5 million will leap into the political unknown as it elects its parliament for the first time under a proportional representation system that will favour coalition governments.

Mr Bolger told parliament his conservative National Party government, which for the past six years has built on free-market reforms enacted by Labour in the 1980s, would resist attempts to turn back the clock. He had to call a general election within six months to avoid a costly and distracting byelection in a seat where an opposition MP resigned over a local scandal.

Despite a comfortable lead in the polls, National is set to fall well short of an overall majority under proportional representation and lacks a viable coalition partner.

An opinion poll showed National and the main opposition Labour Party continuing to lose ground to the New Zealand First Party, which favours "economic sovereignty" and wants to limit foreign ownership of companies to less than 25 per cent.

The poll put support for New Zealand First at 29 per cent, up seven points, compared with National, down 5 to 35 per cent and Labour, down 3 to 15 per cent. The leftwing Alliance Party was steady with 11 per cent support.

New Zealand First has soared in popularity since launching a strident campaign for cuts in immigration. It denies accusations of racist bias against Asians. — *Reuter*

Protest call after voting in Albania

Helena Smith in Athens

ALBANIAN police on Tuesday beat leaders of opposition parties protesting in Tirana against the alleged manipulation of this week's election, witnesses said. Opposition parties had called on their supporters to take to the streets, amid fears that their anger could grow into a violent backlash against Sunday's abortive general election.

As thousands of Albanians celebrated the ruling conservatives' "crushing" victory with fireworks and gunshots, leftwingers were mourning the "end of democracy" in the former Stalinist state. They demanded that the poll be immediately annulled and called on supporters to mass in the capital Tirana.

Although final results have yet to be released, a euphoric President Sali Berisha said his Democratic Party could clinch as much as 65 per cent of the vote, outdoing its landslide victory four years ago.

Before balloting closed on Sunday in the third free election since the collapse of communism, the Socialists claimed that government-instigated fraud had turned it into a travesty of democracy and withdrew from the poll.

They said opposition sympathisers had been intimidated and harassed by secret police at polling stations. In the rocky villages of the south, the ancestral home of Albania's restless ethnic Greek minority, critics said voting had taken place in a "climate of terror".

Allegations of foul play were backed by international observers. One MEP, Jean-François Vallin, of the French Socialist Party, reported that more than 12 observers had seen irregularities in the poverty-stricken north.

"On the basis of what I and my colleagues saw, we can say that these elections were not genuinely fair and in France, for much less, a judge would rule the outcome invalid," he said.

Similar accusations were levelled at the Democrats in the run-up to the election. During the one-month campaign, Dr Berisha faced heavy criticism for his authoritarian manner and strong-arm tactics.

But dismissing the accusations this week the conservatives quickly ruled out a new election. "The [opposition's] departure was an admission of defeat, a well-deserved defeat. The red front should have given up four years ago," Dr Berisha said.

For Western analysts, who had predicted a much closer contest between the two main parties, the scale of the Democrats' victory has spawned fears about Albania's future.

Many said the prospect of the opposition boycotting parliament had triggered concern about the country being run as a one-party state at a time of increasing volatility in the southern Balkans.

In recent weeks, Western capitals have expressed growing anxiety about neighbouring Kosovo, where a spate of violent incidents involving ethnic Albanians has fuelled fears of the southern Serbian province becoming the next Balkan flashpoint.

The United States and the European Union have been loud in their support of the Democrats, not least because the party's market reforms have turned Albania into Europe's fastest growing economy. But the reforms have brought hardship, especially in the countryside where 60 per cent of the population lives.

Women and children bear brunt of world poverty

Vicki Allen in Washington

MOST of the roughly 100 million homeless people in the world are women and children, and up to 600 million live in inadequate, unhealthy shelters, according to a United Nations report released this week.

In a paper prepared for its upcoming conference on the problems of the world's burgeoning cities, the UN Centre for Human Settlements said of the estimated 1.3 billion people living in poverty, 70 per cent are women and girls.

Women and girls also are the most rapidly growing group of impoverished, which the report called "the global feminisation of poverty". They make up half the world's population, but own just 1 per cent of its wealth.

Wally N'Dow, secretary general of the conference — to be held next week in Turkey — said a major purpose of the meeting will be to promote women's rights to own and inherit property and their need for better wages and living conditions.

"There is a tremendous effort . . . to remove those barriers today," N'Dow said. "The cultural barriers, for instance, that affect women's right to ownership of homes in some parts of the world, I think will be one of the most debated issues in Istanbul."

While he said there is broader acceptance worldwide that the situation of women must be improved, the UN report gave a bleak assessment of the current condition.

Some 50,000 people — mostly women and children — die daily because of poor shelter, polluted water and bad sanitation, it said. Some 70 million women and children live in homes where smoke from cooking fires damages their health.

If housing could be brought to a minimal accepted standard, there would be 5 million fewer deaths and 2 million fewer disabilities annually, the UN estimated.

Women are relegated to homelessness or squatter-status in many parts of the world where they cannot legally own or inherit land, cannot obtain bank loans, receive much lower wages than men, and often are abandoned to raise children on their own.

The UN said the lack of safe available water is one of the most pressing health problems for women and older girls, who are usually saddled with the chore of fetching water.

The report said in some parts of rural Africa, women must use up to 85 per cent of their daily energy intake in lugging water. — *Reuter*

Legacy of Sudeten Germans haunts Czech elections

Ian Traynor in Bonn

ANCIENT animosities and unhealed wartime grievances are haunting the final days of the Czech election campaign after senior politicians in Germany attacked Prague over the post-war expulsions of millions of ethnic Germans.

Vaclav Klaus, the Czech prime minister, has rounded furiously on Germany's finance minister, Theo Waigel, declaring that the Czechs did not need lessons on democracy from the Germans, and that they should watch their words over the wartime years.

Relations between the two central European neighbours have been bedevilled since the end of the cold war over the "ethnic cleansing" of 3 million Germans from Czechoslovakia in 1945 and 1946 in revenge for Hitler's occupation from 1938.

Bonn refuses to conclude the kind of agreement it has reached with other countries on compensation for Nazi victims unless Prague apologises for the expulsions, which killed thousands of Germans.

Fearing a rush of property claims, the Czechs are wary. Earlier this year, Bonn questioned the validity of the Allies' 1945 Potsdam Agreement, which endorsed the expulsions, causing the United States to reaffirm the declaration.

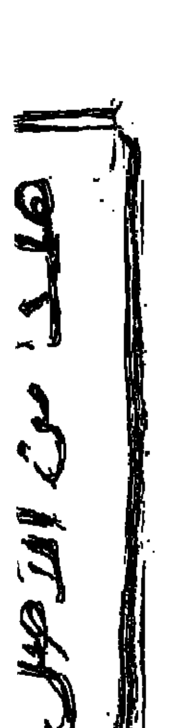
In Nuremburg at the weekend, during the Sudeten Germans' annual Whitsun rally, Mr Waigel and Edmund Stoiber, Bavaria's prime minister, backed their claims and demanded that Prague hold talks with their leaders.

For years, Mr Klaus has refused to deal with the Sudeten lobby, agreeing to talk only with Bonn. Both countries' foreign ministries have been quietly wrangling over the wording of a joint declaration, but the effort collapsed in January when the Germans tabled last-minute demands.

The draft is now believed to be almost complete and both sides have agreed to leave its formal conclusion until after this weekend's Czech poll.

But the demands by Mr Waigel and Mr Stoiber ensured that the emotive issue hijacked the election campaign.

Both the extreme right and left in the Czech Republic have been trying to drum up voter support by exploiting the appeal of anti-German rhetoric. But in April, Milos Zeman, the leader of the social democrats and now Mr Klaus's main rival, said the issue should be shelved until after the poll, and the main parties tacitly agreed.



The Mafia faces a struggle to survive

With the arrest of the Sicilian gangster believed to have blown up Judge Falcone, are the days of the Cosa Nostra numbered, asks **John Hooper**

FOUR years ago Cosa Nostra had just given awesome proof of its power. It had blown away its most troublesome enemy, Judge Giovanni Falcone. Less than two months later, it assassinated his closest collaborator, Judge Paolo Borsellino.

But since then the question of its fate has been coming up with mounting insistence. In January 1993, police arrested Salvatore Riina, the Sicilian Mafia's "boss of bosses" and the man alleged to have ordered the Falcone killing.

In June 1995, they detained Leoluca Bagarella, Riina's lieutenant and the man alleged to have arranged it. Finally, last week they seized Giovanni Brusca, the next most senior Riina aide and the mobster accused of actually detonating the explosion.

In the meantime, the former prime minister, Giulio Andreotti, has been put on trial, charged with being Cosa Nostra's political protector.

The Sicilian Mafia is not the Red Brigades or the Kray gang — it cannot be dismantled just by putting a few individuals behind bars. It is woven into the social fabric of the island. It goes back at least 133 years to the first recorded use of the word, but possibly much further.

Its members have generated so much money that contemplating its demise is rather like contemplating that of General Motors, or Hitachi, or Shell. It is apparently indestructible. A lot of the money today is invested in perfectly legitimate activities in other parts of Italy and the world. So, even if its activities on Sicily were wound up, it could continue to exist elsewhere.

Yet that existence, cut off from its underworld roots, would turn the Mafia into something else: a progressively more innocuous vehicle for the re-investment of ill-gotten gains. So the question of whether Cosa Nostra's criminal power is being broken matters.

In this context, the recent arrests are of less importance than Mr Andreotti's trial. What they have done is not to decapitate the Sicilian Mafia so much as its leading clan: the *corleonesi*, who take their name from a village just outside Palermo.

The removal of Riina, Bagarella and Brusca may have put paid to the clan's pre-eminence. But it does not mean that there are not plenty of other violent, ruthless, clever men from Palermo and elsewhere waiting to take the reins.

But the allegations levelled at Mr Andreotti imply that Cosa Nostra's new leaders will be unable to operate with anything like the same ease as their predecessors.

The politician known as Beelzebub is charged with actively promoting the Mafia's survival in return for the votes that formed the basis of his power and, to a large extent, that of the Vatican-backed Christian Democrats.

If that is correct, then the Sicilian Mafia is indeed in deep, long-term trouble. Politically, both Giulio Andreotti and his brand of Christian Democracy belong to the past. Without someone to pull strings in Rome, Cosa Nostra will be exposed to the full force of police and judicial investigation.

There is some evidence to suggest the Mafia's leaders tried to turn back the clock by infiltrating Silvio Berlusconi's hastily assembled Forza Italia party. But if so, it did them no good.

In April, Mr Berlusconi was comprehensively defeated by an alliance of former communists and ex-Christian Democrats who have spotless reputations with regard to the Mafia. The new government has a much better chance than any of its predecessors of seeing out its five years in power. And it has already signalled that one of its top priorities will be to crush organised crime.

It has to be. It is also committed to keeping Italy unified. The outstanding complaint of northern separatists is that they are being forced to pay out for an underdeveloped south. But the south cannot be brought on while it remains at the mercy of organised crime.

As the new prime minister, Romano Prodi, said the day after he took office, "the Mafia is not the daughter, but the mother, of underdevelopment".

Unless Cosa Nostra wishes to accept a prosperous and legitimate old age, it is going to have to fight for its life. The struggle is likely to be protracted. And it may be terrible to behold.

Giovanni Brusca, is escorted by policemen masked to protect their identity outside the police HQ in Palermo PHOTO: ALESSANDRO FUCARINI

Police in Argentina still fighting their 'dirty war'

Federico Eves in Buenos Aires

WHEN Deputy Inspector Sergio Gadea's rear indicator was cracked one night at a traffic light, his reaction was to fire four shots into the windscreen of the car behind, whose seven occupants included a four-day-old baby and a toddler.

Once, such behaviour would have gone unpunished in the Argentine police.

Domingo Mercante and his family escaped unhurt but did not want to press charges for fear of reprisals from a force whose reputation for rough justice and corruption has improved little since the "dirty war" of the late 1970s.

Mr Gadea is now facing criminal charges, and the interior minister, Carlos Corach, has promised "severe punishment" for him and "a steady hand to eradicate from the police all elements that bring it into disrepute".

It has taken the deaths of at least six unarmed people this year, many more injuries, rapes and beatings in police stations — as well as the sight of policemen shooting demonstrators at point-blank range with rubber bullets in La Plata — for Argentina to address the issue of why, 13 years after democracy returned, the police are even lagging behind the military in adapting to change.

Most cases happened in Buenos Aires and involved teenagers out drinking late. But Roberto Roldán was shot dead by police while rushing his baby to hospital; Clarisa Lencina, aged 26, told state television she had been raped in a police station by two officers; and Marta Benítez Ríos, heavily pregnant, could lose her child after a beating in a police station in Chaco.

Eduardo Duhalde, the governor of Buenos Aires province, his eye on the 1999 presidential elections, has promised "to clean out all the violent elements left over from the last military dictatorship". He started by sacking 11 officers for brutality during the La Plata student riots in February.

The National Security Council is seeking to bring in measures to curb police behaviour. These include a requirement that future officers have completed high school, take psychological tests every year and receive better training and higher pay. Pay now starts at $450 a month, obliging many officers to moonlight as security guards — making them even more itchy on the trigger.

Privately, officials acknowledge that officers who learned their trade under the six-year military regime that began 20 years ago and under which up to 30,000 people "disappeared" have not been rooted out and their methods still prevail.

The independent Centre for Legal and Social Studies says that cases of police killing unarmed civilians rose 57 per cent in the capital last year, to 195. Most cases involve off-duty officers — like one who shot and injured his neighbour because her music was too loud.

Luis Moreno Ocampo, who was the state prosecutor in the trials of the military junta leaders in the 1980s, says the police must learn that "security depends on a climate of not using weapons, since policemen who kill cannot integrate into society".

The Buenos Aires police chief, Pedro Klodzyc, says the "excesses" happen because "society's garbagemen sometimes get dirty with the garbage". He worries, instead, about "the risk of tiring or worrying officers with precautions that could cost them their lives".

Moi sitting pretty for Kenya's presidency

Chris McGreal in Nairobi

PRESIDENT Daniel arap Moi's election prospects should not be bright, given the state of Kenya. Unemployment is rife; power rationing is routine; public services are in disarray; the auditor-general is unable to account for $600 million of government funds; the roads are atrocious; and violent crime is soaring.

Above all, Kenyans are disillusioned with their society's deepening moral decay. Last week, Amnesty International accused Kenya of having the worst record of torture in Africa.

But Mr Moi is a happy man. He is not deluding himself when he says he can expect to be re-elected president at least until the turn of the century. Some of his cohorts are even talking of reviving a title thought to have been buried in Africa: president-for-life.

For all of this, Mr Moi can thank the opposition.

A year after Richard Leakey, Kenya's controversial white conservationist, leapt into politics and sent a shudder through the government with his campaign to unite Mr Moi's opponents, the opposition appears less likely than ever to put forward a single candidate to challenge Kenya's leader whenever he calls a presidential election in the next 18 months.

Mr Leakey's renowned incorruptibility, his success in reviving Kenya's wildlife industry and his ability to provide a new face among the professional politicians shook voters from their apathy. Mr Moi ran scared. His denunciations of the conservationist as a racist intent on re-establishing colonial rule made little impact.

But the government's refusal to register Mr Leakey's party, Safina, proved an effective if crude method of preventing it from attracting members and competing in elections, thereby reducing its ability to persuade other opposition parties to come up with a common strategy.

None the less, the established opposition has itself to blame for its problems. When Mr Moi bowed to foreign and domestic pressure for a multi-party democracy, his party faced a single significant challenger: the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (Ford).

But even before the 1992 presidential election, Ford split. Rival factions have since divided again, levered apart by inflated egos and ethnic competition. There are now four factions carrying the Ford banner, all at each others' throats.

Ford-Kenya is so divided that a national conference two weeks ago degenerated into a pitched battle in which delegates attacked one another with clubs and axes.

New attempts to create a national opposition alliance at the beginning of the year faltered when each of the factions insisted on having control. When Safina proposed the alliance be led by someone from outside politics, Mr Leakey was accused of attempting to dominate it. His organisation pulled out and yet another effort came to nothing.

"We feel that for an alliance to work it must be inclusive and not exclusive," Mr Leakey said. "There is clear evidence a lot of people won't go along unless it is dominated by their characters."

"Instead of the opposition wasting time forming alliances to get a single presidential candidate," said Peter Anyang' Nyong'o, one of Ford-Kenya's most respected politicians, "let us unite and effect constitutional change to make the one who garners at least 50 per cent of the votes president."

Such an amendment would force a single opposition candidate to emerge from a first round of balloting to fight a run-off election. It is unlikely to happen. In 1992 Kenya's first-past-the-post system permitted Mr Moi to slip back into office with just one-third of the ballot.

Opposition infighting has also eased international pressure on Mr Moi. In March, Britain and other large donors promised nearly $750 million in aid, effectively backing away from demands for a level political playing field in Kenya.

The International Monetary Fund is also handing over money again, even though its demands for prosecutions in Kenya's worst corruption scandals have received only a cursory response. Diplomats in Nairobi say the shift is a recognition that they will be dealing with Mr Moi for the foreseeable future.

The president is not without his problems. The ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (Kanu), has its own divisions. Aside from the usual manoeuvring for position within the cabinet, there is an unofficial competition for the vice-presidency, which is seen as the most likely route to Mr Moi's office.

The infighting is partly born of the party's confidence that it will win the next election. Kanu's powerbrokers have their eye on the first poll of the next century.

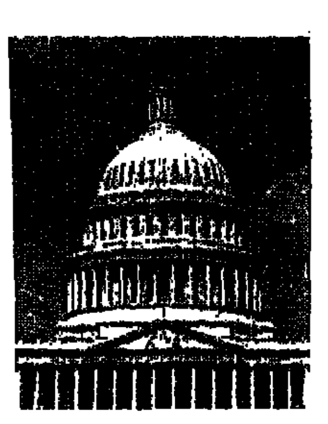
Its main preoccupation is not so much to return Mr Moi, but how to win a two-thirds majority in parliament, which would give it a free hand to amend the constitution. Some of Mr Moi's most powerful aides are talking of an amendment to anoint him president-for-life.

● Armed robbers in Nairobi shot and killed a United Nations driver in broad daylight as he was returning from the airport with a passenger he had just picked up.

A statement from the Kenya office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said Peter Otiene Onginde was shot last week by one of three men in a car that pulled up alongside his vehicle.

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Clinton fails the test of heroism



The US this week

Martin Walker

THIS WAS the week to test how far Senator Robert Dole had revived his sagging electoral fortunes and liberated himself by announcing his farewell from the Senate. The sacrifice was great. The results are mixed, but not too helpful for the Republican. In one poll in Ohio, Dole was running 17 points behind President Clinton before the announcement. A week later, he had narrowed the gap to nine points.

But the Washington Post-ABC poll, published on Friday last week, found Clinton's nationwide lead still awesomely wide at 57-35. One of the questions in the poll was whether Dole's resignation from the Senate made it more or less likely that the respondent would vote for him. Nine per cent said more likely, 8 per cent said less likely, and 82 per cent said no difference.

Everyone knows it is foolish to follow the polls too closely at this stage in the campaign. But the party officials and the campaign finance donors do follow them very closely because they have no alternative. So Dole's failure to get much of a boost from his great announcement is a severe setback. Money that he thought he might unlock is not yet moving.

Moreover Dole had hoped that this was the week when he would start doing some damage to Clinton on the issues. There are two main strategies for this, and while they are not incompatible, they tend to split Republican thinkers into two groups, roughly matching the geographic and social divisions within the party.

The Republicans are traditionally the party of the wealthy, who do not like taxes nor rules and regulations that restrain their enterprise. The party has also traditionally done well electorally when it promises to cut taxes, or at least not to raise them. Dole lost the 1988 Republican primary in New Hampshire to George Bush because he would not sign the No-New-Taxes pledge: this is not a mistake he will ever make again.

But the Republicans are increasingly the party of the social conservatives, who oppose abortions, homosexuality and welfare. Again, remember the 1988 election: having seen off Dole in the primaries, Bush then briskly dispatched Governor Mike Dukakis as a Massachusetts liberal who was soft on crime, insufficiently patriotic and a card-carrying member of the American Council for Civil Liberties.

This is not to say that Bush was a political genius. We learned in 1992 that he was no such thing. But he certainly knew where to hire one. Sadly for him, his pet political genius, Lee Atwater, had died in the meantime, repenting on his deathbed of his ruthless political ways. Atwater's secret was easy enough to decode. Promise the moon on taxes, even if you have to lie. Then hammer the Democrats on values, and no damn squeamishness about fairness.

Dole, who is no duffer politically, has realised that the art of being a modern Republican is steadfastly to avoid choosing between being a fiscal Republican (cutting taxes) and a social Republican (bashing liberals). He will endeavour to be both. Indeed, we saw the promise of the tax-cutting candidate Dole in his long and cordial meeting with his erstwhile rival in the primaries, the megarich publisher Steve Forbes. Three months ago, Dole said that Forbes's flat tax plans were "nutty". Very shortly, we may expect the Dole version. But the timing of when to stress taxes and when to bash a liberal target is very difficult to get right.

Last week Dole got the timing horribly wrong. He announced far in advance that he would go to Wisconsin to make a speech about welfare. Wisconsin is the state of Governor Tommy Thompson, a Republican whose own local welfare reforms have been thoughtful and highly promising. It did not take much skill to figure out what kind of speech Dole planned to give. Clinton, who is at least as smart a politician as Atwater, got his own speech in first, hailing much of the Wisconsin plan, passing it off as his own, and reminding the electorate that he had always promised "to end welfare as we know it".

Dole fumed at having his policies pinched. But then he let loose his second barrel, the bill he has sponsored to outlaw gay marriages. This all began in Hawaii, where the state supreme court in 1993 ruled that the refusal to issue marriage licences to same-sex couples was discrimination, which violates the constitutional guarantee to equal protection under the laws.

The court has since given the state the right to show a "compelling" reason why same-sex couples should not be allowed to marry — and most legal observers reckon that the state will fail to do so. Hawaii's restaurateurs, hoteliers and taxi drivers are already salivating at the tourism boom that should then follow.

Under current law, the other 49 states must then automatically recognise marriages solemnised in Hawaii. Dole is pushing a bill through Congress, called "The Defence of Marriage Act", which says that marriage shall be a "special right", reserved for couples of different sex. This would allow the other states to ignore such Hawaii ceremonies. They could also then ignore the tax and pension and inheritance implications that come when a society legally recognises a marriage, and which probably far outweigh the symbolism of gay weddings.

But even before Dole got around to giving his big speech on the menace to the US embodied by those homosexuals who want to settle down together in cosy couples — and would probably want to vote Republican for financial reasons — Clinton once more got his retaliation in first. The president was not in favour of gay marriages, either. So there.



Clinton, who knows a political time bomb when he sees one, said last week that if such a bill were passed by Congress, he would sign it into law. This is an election year, after all. The latest Newsweek poll found that 58 per cent of the public opposed gay marriages. Clinton doubtless paid more attention to the small print of the poll, where 45 per cent said they would be less likely to support a presidential candidate who favours gay rights and 40 per cent said efforts to support gay rights have gone too far.

They said that because of a historic ruling by the US Supreme Court last week. In effect, the court ruled that it was against the Constitution for any state to pass a law that made it harder for gays to demand equal rights in jobs, housing or any other area of public life.

Clinton and his advisers are quietly delighted at the way Dole is energising the gay vote

The case began when some towns in Colorado, including the trendy ski resort of Aspen, passed local ordinances saying that it was illegal to discriminate against gays in jobs or housing. The religious right then placed on the Colorado ballot a referendum, asking for the right to overrule such local rules, claiming they amounted to "special rights for homosexuals". The voters approved, by 53 per cent. The Supreme Court said this would "impose a special disability on those persons alone. Homosexuals are forbidden the safeguards that others enjoy."

The court voted to uphold gay rights by the solid margin of 6 to 3, to the fury of Judge Antonin Scalia, who said: "The court has mistaken a *kulturkampf* for a fit of spite . . . This court has no business imposing upon all Americans the resolution favoured by the élite class from which the members of this institution are selected, pronouncing that 'animosity' towards homosexuality is evil. I vigorously dissent."

Scalia went on to say that the Coloradans only sought "to counter both the geographic concentration and the disproportionate political power of homosexuals", a comment that was much quoted among the religious right, where it was suggested that this Supreme Court might end up being impeached.

Passions are running high, not least among Clinton's gay supporters, who were dismayed that he let them down over same-sex marriages. They reminded him of the lesson of his election in 1992, that America's gays could deliver as many votes as the blacks and raise as much in campaign funds as the Jewish lobby.

In Los Angeles in October 1991, before Clinton announced he was running for president, he courted a group of rich Californians, who called themselves Angle (Access Now for Gay and Lesbian Equality). Clinton told them he supported full and equal rights for gays. They promised his campaign $100,000 on the spot, and a million if he got the party's presidential nomination. They did even better than that. Angle has its own list of 1,000 donors, and also sends out a newsletter to another 120,000 well-heeled gays in California. In February 1992, when Clinton was almost sunk by scandal, Angle came through with an unexpected $400,000.

In the 1992 election, Clinton had a majority of 5.5 million votes, a reward for his carefully phrased rhetoric of inclusion: "We don't have a single American we can afford to waste." Gays knew what he meant, but the words gave no foothold for the religious right to attack him. Clinton won 43.7 million votes altogether, and 6.3 million of them identified themselves to exit pollsters as gays or lesbians.

The gay vote elected him. And this year in the crucial swing states like California, Illinois and Ohio where gays are well organised, they can probably determine whether or not to elect him again. The question is not whether they might vote for Dole. They won't.

The question is whether they will bother to turn out and vote at all. They may not feel inspired to make any effort to vote for Clinton, but they could very easily be persuaded by the words of Justice Scalia to vote against Dole.

Clinton's supporters among gay groups have their own way to stir up the community. The most powerful television political ads on display this season came from a group called Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. The images are haunting, of a young girl toying with a gun as she contemplates suicide, of a young man being brutally beaten by a gang yelling at him "faggot". Interspersed among the images are the faces of television evangelists Pat Robertson and the Rev Jerry Falwell.

"Homosexuality is an abomination," says Robertson in the ads. "Many of those people involved with Adolf Hitler were satanists. Many were homosexuals. The two things seem to go together."

The impact of this upon gays can be imagined. Even the most apolitical of them know what happened to homosexuals in Hitler's camps, and indeed the pink triangle inmates were forced to wear is now a symbol of some pride among gays.

Clinton and his advisers are quietly delighted at the way Dole is now energising the gay vote. They think it was very smart to stay away from the Supreme Court ruling, except for uttering the single word that it was "appropriate". The White House may think that lets them off the hook.

But there are issues and there are times when a president has a duty, not just to loyal supporters, but to the kind of country he wants to govern. This was one. Republican-appointed justices on the Supreme Court, Anthony Kennedy, Sandra Day O'Connor, John Paul Stevens and David Souter, gave him all the political cover he might have needed. Clinton ducked it, and let down some loyal friends.

One of the most worrying features of this campaign is that Dole is doing so poorly that Clinton is tempted both to grow complacent, and to play it safe. Clinton is at his best with his back to the wall, forced to fight and show himself to be a better man than his inherent caution will usually let him be. Anyone who saw him in New Hampshire in 1992, at the depth of despair yet battling on despite the scandals, recognised something genuinely heroic in the man. We have seen flashes of this again, as he absorbed, contained and finally rolled back the Republican majority in Congress over the past 18 months.

Perhaps Clinton needs a better challenger than Dole to inspire him. But if Dole heeds the Atwater lessons, and keeps bashing away at liberals and tax cuts, we may yet see the real Bill Clinton again.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Scandal over 'political' adoptions

Greeks say they were shipped abroad as part of a ploy by rightwingers to eradicate the left, writes **Helena Smith** in Athens

IN A NEW twist to a tale that has rocked Greece, thousands of Greeks are claiming that they were declared orphans and later shipped overseas or given away for adoption in the post-war years because their parents were on the side of the left in the country's 1946-49 civil war.

Those involved were often placed in children's homes by defeated and destitute parents, but the families expected to reclaim them.

The victims say months of research into their past has brought to light a rightwing "national programme" that aimed to rid Greece of its "communist element" in the 30 years after the war.

Orchestrated by Queen Frederica, the German-born mother of Athens' deposed King Constantine, the scheme allegedly saw as many as 20,000 toddlers being shipped to the United States and Australia. Others are believed to have been deposited around Europe or handed over to "nationalists" in Greece.

"There were great fears that growing up without their parents and full of hate, these children would be a future risk to the country," said Iphighenia Kalfapoulou, a lawyer who heads the Association for the Search for Children Adopted Without the Consent of Their Natural Parents.

'There were fears that growing up without their parents and full of hate, these children would be a risk to the country'

"The programme now explains the role of the 72 'baby-towns' which operated between the 1950s and 1960s and were set up by Frederica. The babies who lived in them all disappeared."

During the poverty-stricken years after the war, thousands of children were handed over by destitute Greeks to state-run institutions around the country. Many had hoped they would be reunited at a later date.

But Ms Kalfapoulou, who was herself adopted by rightwing "patriots", said that the children were very soon being declared dead. "In the baby-towns the children were proclaimed missing people and at the institutions they were issued with false death certificates," she added. "In both cases, however, they were either taken abroad or sold to people with impeccable nationalist credentials."

Since the scandal erupted last year, more than 500 orphans, including many now living in the US, have discovered their real identities.

Under pressure from the victims, the Socialist government has launched an in-depth inquiry into the scam, ordering files to be opened up at public orphanages. Last month it also began to replace antiquated adoption laws, blamed for a rash of recent baby-selling scandals.

Announcing the new legislation, Evangelos Venizelos, the justice minister, said "family courts" would soon be set up to oversee adoptions in an effort to clamp down on the illegal trade.

Adoptees would be given the right to trace their roots, and tough penalties would be imposed on parents caught selling children. "We hope this legislation will be the beginning of the end of the huge social problem that adoptions have caused," he said.

Private hospitals and church-run refuges have been accused of operating illegal adoption schemes with the help of doctors, priests, nurses and lawyers.

Childless couples, unable to endure the long waiting-lists of Greeks wishing to adopt, have reportedly been prepared to pay up to $83,000 for a baby.

Ms Kalfapoulou, whose association played a big role in lobbying for the legislation, said the new law was still inadequate. "It specifically states that private adoptions can continue, which will only encourage the illegal practice. We would have liked to have seen more state control of adoptions in general."

She said the victims would also put pressure on the government to pass other legislation that would facilitate their search for their natural families. "Although the files at state-run orphanages have officially been released, in reality every archive is still branded as top secret."

She added: "It's quite clear that our efforts to get to the truth are being blocked because a lot of children who ended up in Greece were sold to senior officials, such as judges and politicians."



The Week in Britain James Lewis

MPs politely urge Camelot to donate winnings to charity

BRITAIN'S National Lottery, started 18 months ago, has been twice as successful as the Government expected. More good causes have therefore received larger sums from the proceeds. But eyebrows have been raised over the unanticipated profits of nearly £1 million a week pulled in by the lottery's organisers, the Camelot consortium, and MPs last week politely suggested that it might consider handing some of its windfall over to charity.

The cross-party Heritage select committee, reviewing the lottery's operations, concluded that it was a huge success. Its Labour chairman, Gerald Kaufman, was magnanimous in saying: "Just for once, let us praise something which has been done well and has gone right."

He did not begrudge Camelot its profits, but thought it could afford to be generous and hand over "a substantial proportion" of them, though that was entirely a matter for the company's good nature. "Since this lottery is doing twice as well as anybody expected, Camelot ought to be nice and generous."

Camelot said it had donated £500,000 to charity and community projects last year, which seems to fall short of the kind of "generosity" Mr Kaufman had in mind. His committee thought the interest on undistributed prize money should also go to charity rather than into Camelot's profits. And it was "astounded" to learn that the BBC had paid £1.5 million for the exclusive right to screen the lottery draw — a facility which, it considered, should be available to all TV channels free of charge.

Meanwhile, the Science Museum in London is to get £23 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards a new £44 million wing. And the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts was delighted with a lottery grant of nearly £23 million to renovate and extend its dilapidated London premises which, according to the academy's chairman, Lord Attenborough, had never really recovered from its wartime bombing.

ROAD RAGE seized the headlines again when a 73-year-old war veteran, Ronald Francis, was pulled from his car, punched and kicked by two men who threatened to set his vehicle alight. The attackers apparently mistook a courtesy wave by Mr Francis as a two-fingered salute as they allowed him right-of-way in Portsmouth. They abandoned their attack only after spotting his Normandy Veterans' Association badge.

The incident occurred three days after the murder of Stephen Cameron, aged 21, stabbed by another motorist in a dispute at an M25 intersection in Kent.

Meanwhile the new edition of the Highway Code, to be issued next month, will include a section on how to deal with road rage, the Department of Transport confirmed.



FULSOME and eloquent tributes were paid to the courage and spirit of Jaymee Bowen, the 11-year-old girl who died of myeloid leukaemia. She came to prominence last year as Child B when her father took the Cambridgeshire health commission to court because it refused to carry out a second bone marrow transplant on her at a cost of £75,000. The commission argued that Jaymee's chances of recovering from a second transplant were virtually nil, and that the money would be better spent on other patients. Mr Bowen lost his fight but Jaymee survived for another year after an anonymous benefactor paid for her private treatment by another consultant, Peter Gravett. He chose an experimental form of treatment — donor lymphocyte infusion — which had been tried before on only a handful of children.

INSTANT fortunes were made by directors and employees of British Biotech, a little-known Oxford pharmaceutical company, when encouraging results were reported after second-phase clinical tests on its new cancer drug, marimastat. The drug is designed to slow the spread of tumours in a broad range of cancers, and that versatility could be the secret for success if marimastat survives a final set of trials and goes on sale in 1999.

Almost all of Biotech's 350 staff were last year given options to buy shares. Nearly 20 of them became millionaires when the price soared by £8 to £38.25, later falling back to £33.15, placing a £2 billion price-tag on a company which has yet to make a profit. A year ago, the shares were worth just over £5 each.

LORD RUNCIE, who was Archbishop of Canterbury until 1991, implicitly criticised the management policies and "preachy" style of his successor, Dr George Carey, when he talked about the wide-ranging reforms to be debated at the July session of the General Synod.

Internal reform is proposed to restore credibility to the financial organisation of the Church after the loss of £800 million in property speculation and the revelation that the clergy's pension scheme was threatened with bankruptcy. Lord Runcie, however, claimed that under Dr Carey the Church had lost influence and respect among decision-makers. He worried that a "management church" and a "preachy church" would find itself talking to a much smaller constituency.

Judges lambast minister

Alan Travis

THE Tory Establishment combined last week with Britain's most senior judges to launch a persistent and devastating attack on Michael Howard, sealing his reputation as Britain's worst Home Secretary for nearly 40 years.

The unprecedented onslaught from the legal establishment was led by the retiring Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, and was combined with accusations of his betrayal of 12 years of Conservative policies by former Tory ministers.

The 3½-hour attack in the House of Lords made it plain that the Establishment would no longer tolerate a shameless Home Secretary whose three years in office have been marked by repeated prison fiascos, US-style authoritarian penal policies, and defeats in the courts.

Mr Howard's refusal to apologise or change course underlined the knowledge that John Major cannot sack him without opening up an internal party dispute which would threaten to engulf the Government.

Mr Major defended Mr Howard: "Michael and I have decided to introduce a regime of tougher sentences to make sure that when a criminal is locked up he stays locked up."

The sustained onslaught in the House of Lords centred on Mr Howard's white paper proposing the introduction of a US-style "three strikes and you're out" law and order package. Lord Williams of Mostyn, former chairman of the Bar Council, said: "It is a perversion of justice."

The valedictory speech from Lord Taylor, who is seriously ill, gave a clear warning to Mr Howard that he faces huge difficulties in getting his flagship law and order bill on to the statute book before the general election.

Mr Howard, who believes the policy remains a vote winner, admitted he was limiting the discretion of the courts but said the judges were being soft.

Lord Taylor said the introduction of mandatory minimum sentences for repeat burglars and drug dealers "quite simply must involve a denial of justice". It amounted to the jettisoning of government policy spelled out five years ago, which rejected minimum sentences as they would result in more guilty people going free. That policy was "self-evidently wise, fair and just" and he went on to ask "why every one of those propositions of government policy so recently propounded is now to be jettisoned and replaced by its exact opposite?"

The package was based on inadequate research: "Never in the history of our criminal law have such far-reaching proposals been put forward on the strength of such flimsy and dubious evidence.

"Judges need the ability to tailor the sentence to the offence — to make the punishment fit the crime."

The Lord Chief Justice found support from every corner of the House of Lords with the former Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson, arguing that Mr Howard's white paper demonstrated an unprecedented and deplorable message from the Government to the public not to trust the judges.

Jail obsession, page 13



The new Lord Chief Justice, Sir Thomas Bingham PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Howard can expect further opposition

Clare Dyer

MICHAEL HOWARD, still smarting from the savage attack on his sentencing policy by the outgoing Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, would not get an easier ride from his successor, Sir Thomas Bingham, say senior lawyers and judges.

Downing Street confirmed last week that Sir Thomas would take over the top job in the English judiciary on June 4, with his own job as Master of the Rolls going to Lord Woolf.

The moves follow Lord Taylor's enforced retirement through ill health. They will place two of Britain's most open-minded judges at the apex of the judicial hierarchy. Both are clear-thinking reformers untrammelled by the conservative mind-set which has traditionally frustrated attempts at reform.

Sir Thomas, aged 62, lacks Lord Taylor's lifetime of experience in the criminal courts, a disadvantage in the job's main function of overseeing the criminal appeal system. But he is expected quickly to master a job described by Lord Donaldson, his predecessor as Master of the Rolls, as a bed of nails.

Among the sharper nails Sir Thomas will have to contend with are the Home Secretary's proposals for minimum sentences and extending mandatory life sentences, resisted so robustly by Lord Taylor. Sir Thomas has not been an outspoken critic so far — unlike some judges he has no constitutional objections — but few doubt he will play a key part in trying to defeat any bill which results.

Sir Thomas, a less outgoing character than Lord Taylor, is expected to adopt a lower profile, while still defending the judges' corner.

Lord Donaldson said: "Lord Taylor came in after a period of total silence, compounded by Michael Howard's amazing proposals. Now we've got a sort of hothouse going on. Sir Thomas may think the time has come to cool it and try to ensure the public is better informed."

Both Lord Woolf and Sir Thomas are inclined toward the centre politically, and neither is thought to be a Tory voter. Sir Thomas's wife, Elizabeth, is an active Liberal Democrat.

The battle between the judges and the executive is unlikely to end if Labour wins the general election. The shadow lord chancellor, Lord Irvine of Lairg, is a QC who has never been a judge, has none of Lord Mackay's instinct to protect the judges, and is a staunch defender of parliamentary sovereignty.

Lord Woolf, aged 63, is a judicial activist championing judges' right to make law through cases.

Lord Woolf and Sir Thomas have long supported incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into English law. Labour is committed to the move, though it will mean a shift of power from Parliament towards the judges.

NHS plan for drug firms to treat sick

David Brindle

MINISTERS appear ready to let drugs companies strike American-style deals with the national health service (NHS) to take over the prevention and treatment of certain illnesses.

A Department of Health document sets out a framework to govern such deals between the drugs industry and health authorities or fund-holding doctors in what it calls "disease management partnerships".

Health experts last week warned of the danger of health care being distorted by commercial considerations, and called for full piloting and evaluation of any schemes.

However, the health department document proposes only limited checks. It says ministers are "inclined to the view that piloting and evaluation are primarily a matter for local, rather than national, determination".

In the United States, "disease management" has emerged as a means of curbing health care costs by giving drugs companies a commercial incentive to control an illness: limiting prevalence through prevention, stabilising sufferers through drug therapy or arranging surgery.

The new circular has a covering letter which states: "We are, as you know, considering the issues raised by disease management partnerships between the private sector and the NHS, particularly the extent to which the [NHS] executive seeks to regulate NHS participation in such ventures."

Such partnerships, the circular says, may involve a contract with a drugs company restricting or specifying which drugs may be used to treat patients, and determining provision of other services.

If partnerships go ahead, they must be "appropriate to a publicly-funded service"; compatible with national arrangements for prescribing and dispensing medicine; represent good value for money; and avoid conflicts of interest.

Patient consent must be obtained and patients must continue to receive the most appropriate treatment for their condition, the circular says. "Agreements should not bind clinicians to use exclusively a particular company's product, unless no therapeutically effective alternatives are available."

Chris Ham, director of the health services management centre at Birmingham university, said the idea of disease management deals needed to be approached cautiously.

"It has to be done in a way that is properly evaluated and meets people's legitimate concerns about the NHS getting too close to the drugs industry and ending up skewing services because commercial motivations are coming into the picture too strongly," Professor Ham said.

● Nursing unions last week reacted furiously to a report, endorsed by NHS leaders, proposing the profession be submerged in a new breed of "generic carers".

The report says there is a "compelling" case for increasing sharply the number of such staff who have no professional qualification. Within 10 years, 40 per cent could be non-nurses, compared with 28 per cent now. Unions condemned the report as a cover for de-skilling nursing and crude cost-cutting.

The report, The Future Healthcare Workforce, is the result of an 18-month study commissioned by the heath services management unit at Manchester university.

Employers to access police files on staff

Barbie Dutter

EMPLOYERS will be given access to the criminal records of job applicants under proposals to be outlined by the Home Office this month.

A white paper will propose that an independent agency be set up to manage access to police criminal records.

Job seekers will be asked to present employers with an official certificate stating whether they have a criminal record, available for a fee from the agency only to the individual concerned.

Most employers would not be able to approach the agency, but they would be allowed full access via the agency for applicants in sensitive fields or positions of trust.

Categories are likely to include dentists, opticians, lawyers, taxi drivers, accountants, nursing home managers, bank and building society managers, National Lottery ticket sellers and firefighters.

Checks would be carried out with the agreement of the applicants who would receive a copy of the information.

Enhanced vetting, including not only current and spent convictions, but also information from local police records for minor offences and cautions, is proposed for prospective employees who would have regular, unsupervised access to children.

Statutory authorities involved in work with children, such as social services and education departments, can already carry out checks on potential employees.

The criminal records of 7 million people are held on a new computer system, Phoenix, at Scotland Yard.

When the proposals were first leaked last year, they alarmed those who worked with ex-offenders who said it would effectively exclude tens of thousands of people from the job market because of one mistake in the past. Many ex-prisoners are among the long-term unemployed.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 states that details of convictions which carry a prison sentence of 30 months or less do not have to be disclosed after 10 years.

Major goes to war with Europe

Guardian Reporters

JOHN MAJOR provoked the biggest crisis in Anglo-European relations since Britain joined the European Union in 1973 by declaring last week a policy of non co-operation with her partners in retaliation at their refusal to lift the ban on British beef exports.

An angry John Major accused unnamed partners, known to include the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, of a breach of faith and a wilful disregard of Britain's interests. The policy means Britain will first use its veto to block the passage of all EU directives requiring unanimity.

Britain will also adopt a policy of non co-operation at meetings of the Inter-Governmental Conference. If no solution is found by the start of the next EU Heads of Government summit in Florence on June 21 and 22, Mr Major vowed to disrupt its proceedings and refuse to sign any communiqué at Florence, so turning it into a legal nullity.

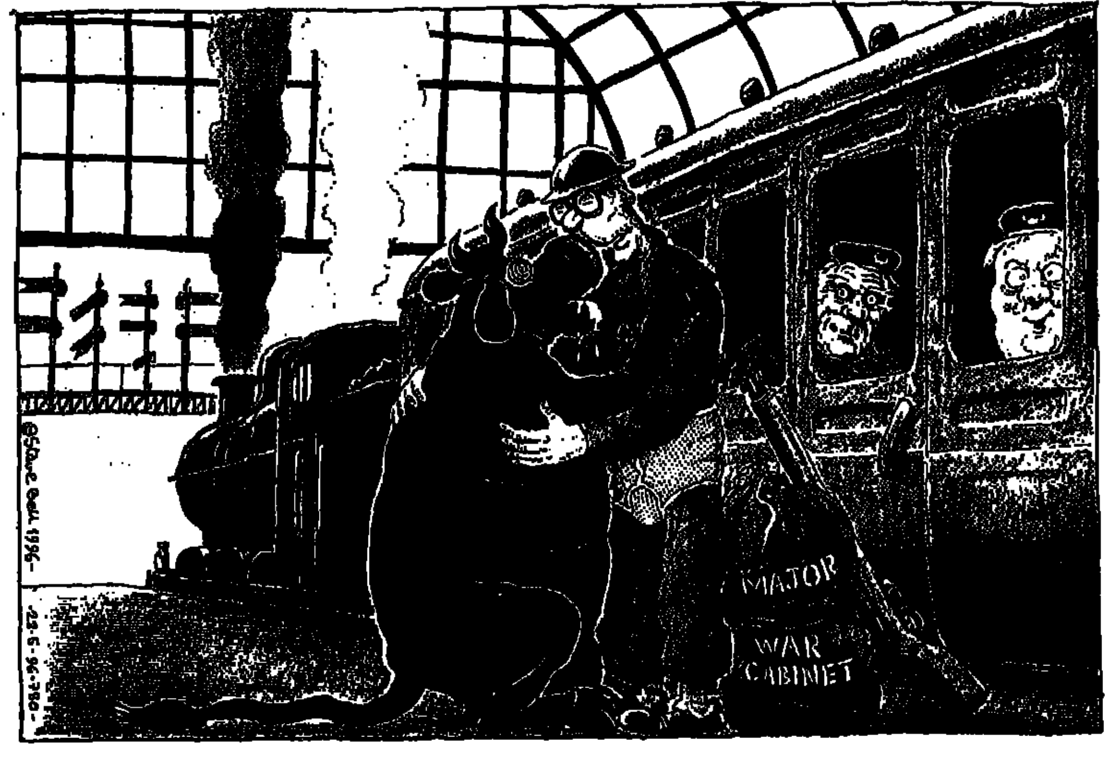
The policy takes Mr Major to the brink of breaking both EU and British law, but the strategy has been pitched to prevent Britain being exposed to counter legal action.

The Prime Minister rounded on his European partners, especially Spain, Germany and Austria, saying: "A balanced proposal on the best scientific advice had been ignored by a number of member states, in some cases despite prior assurances of support. I must tell the House that I regard such action as a wilful disregard of Britain's interests and in some cases a breach of faith."

Delighted Tory Eurosceptics claimed Mr Major had achieved a massive internal political victory against the party's pro-European wing, so casting the die for a fiercely patriotic Tory re-election strategy.

Mr Major's drastic plans to paralyse Europe follows British ministers' exasperation at the repeated refusal of EU countries to take even limited steps to lift the two-month ban on British beef products.

The policy of attrition, agreed in outline by the Cabinet last month, was sanctioned in detail with the pro-European Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke, and the chief whip, Alistair Goodlad, last week. The Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, who had canvassed cabinet ministers for retaliatory options, also gave his endorsement. Friends of Mr Clarke insisted he was a genuine, if reluctant, convert.



The move provoked a furious response in parts of Europe. "These problems cannot be solved by strongarm tactics or blackmail," the Italian foreign minister, Lamberto Dini, said. Sweden, which has also supported Britain over the beef ban, warned that the EU must ensure that any British ban does not affect the work of the Community.

However, EU ministers will probably vote by a sufficient majority to lift the partial ban on June 3 or — after a further delay of 15 days — the Commission will invoke rarely used powers to lift it.

The crisis meanwhile flared into a party political clash in Britain which could turn the coming general election into a poisonous battle over patriotism.

As British officials started applying the veto to routine EU business in Brussels, Mr Rifkind accused the Opposition leader Tony Blair of undermining the Government's efforts to get the worldwide beef ban lifted.

Mr Rifkind's attack came after Mr Blair had used his one-day visit to Rome to offer wary support for the new British tactics of "pressure combined with negotiations".

"Talk of wars on Europe and all the rest is irresponsible and foolish," the Labour leader said after meeting Romano Prodi, the new Italian prime minister. "It is absolutely essential that we do all we can to ensure that the Government strategy works and we get the ban lifted."

But Mr Blair's promise not to undermine the national interest while judging the British measures step by step was not enough for Mr Rifkind. "He cannot make up his mind on such a crucial issue. That is pretty pathetic," he said.

Gordon Brown called the attack proof that the Tories are electioneering instead of "attempting to undo the negotiating disasters and incompetence".

Mr Major's European tightrope walk became increasingly precarious over the weekend as the Cabinet's policy of non co-operation was attacked by both Tory left and right — and was brushed dismissively aside by Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission.

Though Mr Santer's insistence that the BSE-led crisis was largely the fault of Britain's own six-week delay even annoyed Labour, the most ominous words were uttered by a former minister, George Walden, who threatened to resign the Tory whip if Mr Major's anti-European stance over beef gets much more serious.

Mr Walden, who is stepping down as MP for Buckingham at the next election, has no plans to defect to Labour or the Liberal Democrats. But he has less to lose than Mr Major, whose overall Commons majority is now one.

While stressing he would do "nothing petulant or rash", Mr Walden, a Euro-agnostic rather than enthusiast, said he would be adopting a wait-and-see attitude. But he made plain that he believes Mr Major is making a big mistake. "I don't see the Government's game plan. If I did, I might be a little less critical," he said.

Ironically, the MP's fear — that the confrontation with Europe will rapidly escalate — is precisely what some Eurosceptics hope will happen.

With MPs on both sides jittery that the Cabinet may be slipping towards an autumn election — party workers have been told not to take holidays in October, November and December.

Comment, page 12

Conservative MPs revolt over media bill

Rebecca Smithers and Patrick Wintour

TWO rising rightwing stars of the Tory back benches were forced to resign as parliamentary private secretaries last week after they voted against the central plank of the Government's Broadcasting Bill limiting cross-media ownership.

John Whittingdale, MP for Colchester South and Maldon, once political adviser to Margaret Thatcher and now an aide to the education minister Eric Forth, and Peter Atkinson, MP for Hexham and PPS to two Foreign Office ministers including Jeremy Hanley, defied Government whips with an amendment.

They tabled and then backed the amendment which would have allowed newspaper groups such as News International and the Mirror Group to buy stakes in terrestrial television companies. The two men immediately resigned when their amendment was defeated by just one vote — 14 to 13.

The amendment would have cut through the Broadcasting Bill by allowing newspaper groups to buy stakes in terrestrial TV companies regardless of their share of the newspaper market, so long as it was decreed to be in the public interest. Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, inheriting a policy from Stephen Dorrell, had insisted no newspaper group with more than a 20 per cent share in the newspaper market should be allowed a stake in commercial TV.

The threshold blocks both Rupert Murdoch's News International and the Mirror from seeking a stake in Channel 3 and 5 TV franchises.

Rebels plan own party

REBEL Labour councillors who were expelled from the party last year after forming a breakaway faction are planning to launch an alternative party and field candidates in the next general election, *writes Barbie Dutter.*

A number of the 15 Walsall councillors who were expelled in December over claims that they operated a "party within a party" hope to launch their Democratic Labour Party by the end of June.

It would bring a third Labour party into the political arena, following the launch of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party on May 1.

Meanwhile the Labour party disbanded the ruling group on Hackney council in east London after a revolt over last month's election of the mayor.

Thirty-six of the 39 councillors can rejoin the group only if they give an undertaking to abide by party rules. If they refuse, they will be deemed to have expelled themselves.

● Bill Morris, the leader of the Transport and General Workers Union — Labour's biggest union affiliate — warned that a Labour administration would be offered "no favours" and would be treated like "any other employer" in negotiations on public sector pay.

Tory cash linked to Serb firm on US blacklist

Guardian Reporters

THE Conservative party was plunged into fresh turmoil last week after it was revealed that a Yugoslav-born British citizen at the centre of an investigation into funding was a director of two companies on a US Treasury sanctions blacklist drawn up as a result of the war in the Balkans.

Zanic Tancic, aged 49, originally from Serbia, said to have given an undisclosed sum to the Tory party when Jeremy Hanley was chairman, is thought to have no links to the Bosnian Serbs or their leader Radovan Karadzic.

There is no suggestion Mr Tancic acted improperly, but the revelations are bound to cause embarrassment for the Tory party hierarchy.

Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, announced an investigation into funding after the Sunday Times claimed a Serbian businessman had made a donation to the party.

Mr Tancic, now living in France after gaining British citizenship several years ago, is managing director of Metta Trading, and a former chairman of Metalchem International, both of which featured on the blacklist. One of his fellow former directors at Metta Trading was Jovan Zebic, aged 57, now deputy prime minister of the joint Serbian-Montenegrin state.

Mr Tancic's solicitors, Peter Carter-Ruck and Partners, who said neither company had ever traded with Yugoslavia, said Mr Zebic had been removed from the board in July 1993 to comply with sanctions.

A US Treasury spokesman confirmed that both companies were still on its blacklist.

Robin Cook, shadow foreign secretary, said: "It is clear the public has every right to be concerned. The only way the Conservatives can clear the air is by coming clean with their list of donors."

The Sunday Times has alleged that unidentified businessmen who made donations to the Tory party had indirect links with Mr Karadzic, wanted on war crime charges.

But the recent statement from solicitors acting for one businessman referred to in the article stated that the client was "outraged by any suggestion that he is linked in any way to Radovan Karadzic or the Bosnian Serbs".

Labour and the Liberal Democrats later challenged John Major to confirm allegations that MI6 warned him as early as 1992 that the Conservative party was receiving five-figure cheques from Serbian sources linked to Mr Karadzic, and to explain why further cheques were still being received as late as 1994.

Mr Cook said he would press the Prime Minister to confirm that MI6 — warned by a Tory MP working for the intelligence services during a tour of former Yugoslavia — had alerted Downing Street, and to explain, if so, "why the Conservative party was still receiving in 1994 funds from a company on the US government's blacklist".

Mr Cook complained it now looked as if the donation was "part of a pattern stretching over the years of Britain's military presence in Bosnia. No wonder MI6 was worried. Ordinary people too will be worried."

The information which has now come to light is understood to have been passed to MI6 by an unnamed Tory MP in 1992. According to the Sunday Times, after receiving a report from an MI6 officer about the 1992 donation, Sir Colin McColl, former head of MI6, wrote on the report: "This should be treated as a hot potato and should be passed immediately to the Prime Minister." It reported MI6 was later told that Mr Major had received the warning and had ordered the money be returned.

In Brief

PATRICK KELLY, the Bishop of Salford, has been named as the new Archbishop of Liverpool. He combines a conservative approach to theology with a concern for social issues and commitment to ecumenicalism.

THE millionaire businessman Owen Oyston was jailed for six years after being convicted of raping and indecently assaulting a 16-year-old model in 1991.

BRITAIN'S military planners are resigned to maintaining a substantial force in Bosnia after the Nato-led forces withdraw at the end of the year. But the Chief of Defence Staff, Field Marshal Sir Peter Inge, has warned privately that Britain is not prepared to fill the gaps left by other nations.

THE daughter of the sculptor Henry Moore has lost her legal fight to gain control of some of her father's works.

MARK NEWELL, a former financier jailed for helping his brother to cover up the murder of their wealthy parents in Jersey, is free to inherit part of the family fortune after being freed less than two years into a six-year sentence.

THE number of charities found guilty of malpractice or maladministration soared by a third last year to almost 400.

A FORMER soldier was jailed for life for trying to kill a man who picked him up in a bar. George Rees, who had suffered homosexual rape and abuse in the army, taunted Tony Grundy about his sexual tastes and then stabbed him three times with a kitchen knife.

TWO men were jailed for distributing child pornography on the Internet after a plea that the material did not constitute photographs was rejected.

THE National Cash Registers Book Award, Britain's most valuable non-fiction prize worth £25,000, was awarded to the favourite Eric Lomax for his book The Railway Man, about Japanese prisoners of war during the second world war.

OVER a quarter of British Council employees based in the UK are to lose their jobs in a deal under which the Foreign Office will help fund redundancies to save posts abroad.

THE UK fell from 15th to 19th place in the global competitiveness league table this year. The UK was behind four other members of the Group of Seven major industrial nations — the US, Japan, Germany and Canada. Seven years ago, Britain held 11th place but has now been overtaken by Chile, Belgium, Luxembourg and Finland.

British to give ground on IRA

Eamonn Mallie in Belfast and Mary Holland in Dublin

THE BRITISH Government is prepared to allow detailed discussions to begin on constitutional and political issues at the all-party Northern Ireland talks before the IRA starts handing over its weapons.

However, the process will be conditional on the Republicans giving a commitment at the beginning of the talks on June 10 that the IRA will decommission sooner rather than later during the round-table discussions.

The British move came as Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, prepared to meet Dick Spring, the Irish Foreign Minister, in Dublin on Tuesday to try to resolve the serious differences between the two governments over decommissioning weapons.

The meeting has been given added urgency by Thursday's elections in Northern Ireland, which are intended to provide a route into the all-party talks. Mr Spring has said he is "determined rather than optimistic" about bridging "the considerable distance" between them.

The meeting was called to try to break the deadlock that followed four hours of discussions in London last week at which the two sides failed to reach agreement on several points pertinent to the start of this month's talks.

The British government has so far failed to demonstrate to Dublin how John Major's promise, given in an Irish Times interview, that decommissioning will not be allowed to block negotiations, will work out in practice.

The IRA has repeatedly made it clear it will not accept decommissioning as a precondition for negotiations. In turn, Dublin now accepts there would not have been a ceasefire in the first place had there been such a stipulation. Dublin takes the view it would be much harder a second time round to make another ceasefire conditional on decommissioning as a route into the June 10 talks.

The British government holds to the view that it has compromised on the issue. Sir Patrick Mayhew said last month the Government wanted decommissioning ahead of all party negotiations. The IRA said it could only happen at the end. The report by the international panel headed by George Mitchell provided a middle course on decommissioning.

Failure to find some way of dealing with the decommissioning issue has inevitably cast doubt on whether Sinn Fein will be admitted to the talks since it requires another IRA ceasefire for the party to be included in them.

But both governments will be carefully watching the response to the latest developments by David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, who says that "product, equipment of some sort" — decommissioning in any other sense of the word — must be handed over during the opening session of the June talks.

He has threatened to withdraw the support of his party's nine MPs at Westminster if there is any "backsliding" by the Government on the issue. — *The Observer*

● Mary Robinson is to visit Britain next week, the first official visit by any Irish president.

Child support . . . Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams canvassing in South Armagh for this week's Northern Ireland elections PHOTO: KELVIN BOYES

Boy held by Nigerian forces 'as a hostage'

Rebecca Smithers and Barbie Dutter

A 13-YEAR-OLD British boy arrested and detained for a month by the Nigerian security forces is being held "hostage", apparently because of his father's political connections, it emerged on Sunday.

Confusion surrounding John-Paul Mokulou's plight deepened after he spent most of the weekend being questioned by the authorities in Lagos, despite having been released from detention last week and reunited with his family.

The Nigerian authorities have asked to see the boy's passport and ordered him to report to them twice a week, effectively barring his return home to London, where he lives with his mother.

Graham Hand, Britain's deputy high commissioner in Lagos, said consular staff who saw John-Paul said he was fit and cheerful. Intense pressure would be brought to bear on the Nigerian authorities to allow the boy to return home.

Asked by BBC Radio's World at One if John-Paul was being kept as a sort of "hostage" because the authorities wanted his father, Mr Hand said: "I think that is true."

The teenager was arrested in April while visiting his father and other relatives in the West African state.

Security forces raided the house he was visiting in Lagos on April 23, apparently to seize his father, who is believed to be related to the imprisoned former president Major-General Olusegun Obasanjo.

John-Paul was kept under arrest in a security service building on the outskirts of Lagos in an apparent attempt to force his father, who escaped during the raid, to give himself up.

The boy was released last week and was expected to fly back to his Britain with his mother. But he was still with the Nigerian authorities on Sunday after six hours of "further questioning".

In London, Foreign Office officials said they had "serious concerns" about the boy's case, and summoned representatives from the Nigerian High Commission for an emergency meeting.

Although John-Paul was born in Britain, and is travelling on a British passport, Foreign Office officials have told his MP, Glenda Jackson, who represents Hampstead and Highgate, that they are unable to take further action to ensure his safety because of his dual nationality.

Ms Jackson said: "I am deeply disturbed that despite initial reports of his release John-Paul is being prevented from leaving Nigeria. It is imperative that the British High Commission in Lagos does everything in its power to ensure John-Paul's safety."

Ofsted clash with councils

A BATTLE of wills is developing over the plans by Ofsted, the schools inspection agency, to survey maths standards in three authorities where test and examination results are below average, *writes Donald MacLeod.*

Knowsley on Merseyside, and Greenwich and Newham in London, are demanding assurances about the content and presentation of the proposed survey report, assurances which Ofsted is unlikely to give.

Senior Ofsted officials believe they have the right to administer tests to children as part of their remit to inspect schools. They said they would go ahead without the co-operation of the local authorities if the negotiations broke down.

Ofsted's report on reading standards in three London boroughs provoked a row after being rewritten by Chris Woodhead, the chief inspector, to sharpen criticism of poor teaching. Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets accused him of political bias for omitting or playing down the impact of poverty and deprivation.

● Jane Brown, the head teacher of an east London primary school, who was criticised for preventing pupils from seeing the ballet, Romeo and Juliet, has become an Ofsted inspector.

Milk fears create new food crisis

Michael White

THE Government was this week enmeshed in another escalating food safety crisis after insisting there was no cause for alarm over powdered baby milk — and therefore no need to identify nine brands thought to contain potentially harmful chemicals.

Against the background of the running battle over beef, it was not a formula designed to quell concern. Consumer groups and opposition MPs demanded more information.

The row arises from research suggesting that damage to human fertility and even cancers could arise from phthalates in some milks. This group of chemicals is common in plastic packaging, though at levels well below European Union safety standards.

The Government's deputy chief medical officer, Dr Jeremy Metters, issued a statement saying: "The Department of Health has seen the papers and there is no cause for alarm. Mothers should continue to use the infant formula that they have been feeding their babies."

A junior agriculture minister, Tim Boswell, said: "We do not think there is a risk in the normal sense of that word for babies, for their parents and for the general public."

He refused to identify brands found to be vulnerable in the research. "If there was a risk, we would name them . . . This is not a risk situation. It is undesirable. We are dealing with it. There is no need to name the brand."

His insistence that the information on which media reports are based was published in his department's food safety bulletin two months ago did not reassure critics. Labour and Liberal Democrat spokesmen argued that the scare again raised the need for an independent food standards agency out of the Ministry of Agriculture's producer-dominated reach. Labour farms spokesman Gavin Strang said: "There is no justification for this secrecy. As for refusing now to name the brands at risk, that is utterly indefensible."

Shadow health spokesman Henry McLeish accused ministers of a familiar combination of "arrogance and complacency".

"It is simply unacceptable for the Ministry of Agriculture to say we do not need to worry. It is an appalling indication that they have still not learned the lesson of the beef scare."

John Chisholm, deputy chairman of the British Medical Association GP's committee, said: "Mothers will find this very frightening. They have a right to know the facts, so that they can choose milk that is safe."

There are four main manufacturers, Cow & Gate, Nestlé, Farley, and Milupa, though not all make powdered milk for the British market and some may also be involved in "own brand" products for the big supermarkets — which rushed to insist their brands were safe.

The Infant and Dietetic Foods Association said levels of phthalates were low and did not represent a risk to infants. Heather Paine, spokeswoman for the association, said: "There will be levels of phthalates in all infant formulas, they are everywhere."

Time to confront Burma's bullies

THE SLORC is confused, and like all insecure regimes it is becoming both weaker and more dangerous. Last week the ruling military junta in Burma, which bears the Orwellian title of State Law and Order Council, arrested more than 250 members of the National League for Democracy. It did so to prevent the NLD members from holding an entirely peaceful party meeting. This went ahead anyway, with a huge crowd of undeterred supporters cheering the NLD's leader Aung San Suu Kyi. "Giving in to bullying," she told them, "is not good for . . . the bully or those who are bullied." The official press has denounced Ms Suu Kyi as a "poisonous snake" and a "sorceress". Then on Monday one tame newspaper published a commentary addressing her in more respectful terms, and claiming that the regime supported the "democratic principle" of freedom of association. It also returned to the theme of dialogue between the Slorc and the democratic forces. The NLD, we should note, though described as being "in opposition", must by virtue of the 1990 election — which it won overwhelmingly — be regarded as Burma's rightful government.

The junta has played word-games several times before, but the effect of international pressure and adverse publicity upon it now should not be underestimated. Ms Suu Kyi herself deserves most of the credit: refusing to be exiled from her native country she sat out the generals under house arrest until they sought to regain credibility by releasing her. Since then she has gradually found her voice while avoiding any over-provocative move. Her strength, and that of the democracy movement, lies in the simplicity of its demands. These are set out clearly in an interview in the New Internationalist with John Pilger — whose own recent work on Burma, with David Munro, has refocused our attention on the horrors of the Slorc. "We want a system that will guarantee our rights so that we can live in security," she says, "so that we do not have to wonder from day to day what will happen to us if we do something that will annoy those in power." It should not be too much to ask.

It is not always easy to decide just how far to intervene in another country's internal politics. But the case of Burma — like that of South Africa under apartheid — is overwhelming. The only question to be asked is what can be done most effectively. Western governments greeted Ms Suu Kyi's release from house arrest as a signal for relaxing pressure and encouraging trade contacts: this, as the junta's behaviour shows, sends exactly the wrong signal. The regime in Rangoon should be told that it faces international isolation and sanctions, and that its first step must be to release the detained NLD members. Whether or not some of these have been sent to the Insein prison camp, conditions there for hundreds of political prisoners, as reported by Amnesty International, are also a matter for serious concern.

Whatever governments choose to do, individuals can all make their own decisions. No reputable travel agent and tour operator should allow travel to Burma to remain in its brochure and the independent tourist should stay away. No business firm should fall for the absurd and callous proposition of a recent British trade conference that Burma will become "the next Asian tiger". With railways and construction projects being built by forced labour, it neither deserves to, nor does it possess the necessary popular dynamism. Nor is it a safe bet (as Ms Suu Kyi argues) so long as the brutal, but baffled, generals remain in charge.

An election in July, by jingo?

BY THREATENING non-cooperation with the workings of the European Union as a result of the continuing beef ban, John Major has taken a dangerous leap into the dark with Britain's future. His statement to Parliament last week promised non co-operation with a set of European partners who — whatever their own domestic problems over the single currency — are increasingly impatient with the anti-European hysteria in Britain. This was not a carefully thought out response to the genuine difficulties imposed by the beef crisis. It was an impulsively self-indulgent reaction, hastily cobbled together for party reasons after Britain's failure to get its way on beef derivatives at the veterinary scientists' meeting last week. Some will say that it can be coolly ignored because it is rhetorical, designed mainly to excite the backbenches and the Tory press. That is too complacent. Mr Major is letting loose a whirlwind that could put at hazard the Britain's relationship with Europe.

This of course is exactly what a growing section of Mr Major's party want. The Conservative party, its fantasies whipped into hysteria by the right-wing press, is in an unprecedentedly febrile mood. The beef crisis has been hijacked by the Europhobes and is now being used as a lever to break the link with the EU altogether. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that some parts of the party are in the mood for war. The beef crisis has encouraged Conservative Europhobes to adopt language and attitudes which shame their party and this country and which are damaging our national interest. The anti-German mood among some MPs is an absolute disgrace. Mr Major, to his shame, has chosen not to use his authority to put an end to such talk but instead to put his authority at its service.

British policy over the beef crisis is in a quandary, but it is one of the Government's own making. The beef crisis derives directly from two long-term Conservative obsessions, given their heads during the 1980s. The first was the encouragement of the view that all regulations, including in this case health and safety regulations in the meat industry, were a shackle on business. The second was the Conservative government's consistently servile attitude to the interests of the agricultural lobby, as opposed to consumer or environmental interests.

One of the upshots was the spectacular spread of BSE in British cattle, something which the Conservatives have always belittled and failed to understand. This neglect has tainted the British meat industry, and Britain is now paying the price. The European ban came years after bans by the US and many other nations which went wholly unremarked by the party and the press. But the Conservatives have allowed their obsession with Europe to blind them to the logic of consumer boycotts.

Mr Major's actions are those of a weak leader. The great danger is that when his threats fail, he will be weaker still and allow himself to be driven by his party into even more confrontational positions against Europe. Increasingly, the logic of the Government's position takes it towards withdrawal from Europe altogether. If Mr Major means what he says, June could be the moment when the remnants of pre-Thatcherite Conservatism are finally washed away by the rushing tide of Europhobia. A jingo election in July? Don't bet against it.

An ode response

HOW many people, listening to the Ode to Joy from Beethoven's ninth symphony, stop and think to themselves that the composer was German? Not many. But to our knowledge there are two exceptions: the Nazis, and now the British Tory tabloids. It is not a happy pairing, and it is one that ought to give the latter pause for real thought.

This latest entry in the Any Stick To Beat A Dog album arises because the BBC has chosen the Ode to Joy as the theme tune for its coverage of this month's Euro 96 football championships which, in case you have recently returned from Mars, will take place in England. Education Secretary Gillian Shephard claims to find the decision "unbelievable". Party chairman Brian Mawhinney is upset that the BBC could not support British teams with British music. Former industry minister John Butcher finds the choice of the Ode "bizarre and unacceptable".

It is the Tories' bad luck that they have turned against Beethoven for being German just as a new tome, Beethoven In German Politics, has been published by Yale University Press. From David Dennis's book we discover that Germans are constantly reinventing Beethoven in the image of their own particular era. Over the years Beethoven has been variously recast as a French revolutionary, a German nationalist, a proto-communist, a proto-Nazi, a precursor of the Third Reich, the GDR, German reunification and the European Union.

Only the Nazis, however, wanted to celebrate Beethoven because he was a German. And only the Tories and the British tabloids want to drive him off the airwaves for the same reason. Presumably they would prefer a bit of British music — as long as it is not by Handel (German), Delius (son of a German), Holst (sounds German) or Britten (pacifist so probably pro-German). Best to stick with God Save the Queen. Except, isn't she German too?

Where justice takes a back seat to peace

Martin Woollacott

WE KNOW their faces better than those of many of our own leaders. There is the one who looks like a stand-up comedian, with his absurd plume of hair. The other has a carnivorous appearance, like the boss of a sausage factory who eats too many of his own wares. Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic dominated the war and, for the past few weeks have been dominating what can be called the peace in Bosnia. The question of whether Karadzic, in particular, is going to end up in The Hague, facing war crimes charges, or whether he will continue to control the Bosnian Serb republic he created, has been much discussed. The compromise seems to be that he will do neither. It's unsatisfactory, and not yet confirmed, but, if it is, it will be better than nothing.

The future of what was Yugoslavia is still in contention, as it was during the actual fighting, between those outside forces who want merely to contain the conflict, and those with at least slightly more radical ideas. The destruction of Karadzic and perhaps Mladic as well could serve either purpose.

For those who want true intervention, it could lead on to more vigorous action both within Bosnia and against Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman in Serbia and Croatia. For those who merely want containment, it would be a limited process but one dramatic enough to legitimise the decisions made at Dayton.

The tale is a tangled one. The Clinton administration has been bombarded by calls for the arrests of Karadzic and Mladic. Meanwhile Carl Bildt, the chief of the civilian international effort in Bosnia, had been trying to out-manoeuvre Karadzic by building up the more moderate prime minister of the Bosnian Serbs, Rajko Kasagic, who seemed established in Banja Luka, which is a real town, while Karadzic languished in dismal Pale.

Kasagic was responding well to the inducements of international aid, and was ready to say, at least, that refugees ought to be returning. If things had gone according to plan, John Major's trip to Banja Luka last week would have been part of this process of building up Kasagic, which was helped by the recent deployment of British troops to a base outside that town. But Karadzic made Kasagic an offer he could not refuse, and replaced him with one of his cronies.

Bildt was angry. Richard Holbrooke, who pushed the Dayton accord through, was both furious and tendentious. "If Karadzic gets away with it, it will lead to the partition of the country," he said, ignoring his own role in that process. Richard Goldstone, the prosecutor at the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, says the arrest of Karadzic and Mladic would be "not only in the interests of justice but in the interests of peace".

Now there is a report that Clinton's special envoy has secured a promise from Milosevic that Karadzic will take a political back seat. This was the deal that Bildt first brokered, but with Kasagic in place. Even so, the idea is still that Karadzic's influence will wane and his men in time lose their places. How could Milosevic favour the arrest of Karadzic, or Mladic? In The Hague, they could implicate him in a way that could not be ignored by the most cynical outside government. From Milosevic's point of view, it would be far better if Karadzic died or disappeared. Yet that might also prove troublesome. Meanwhile there are still gains, like US recognition of Serbia, to be extracted from Washington while negotiating, among other things, on the fate of Karadzic.

The contradiction at the heart of Western policy in former Yugoslavia is that between using, and placating, the existing regimes in Serbia and Croatia and pursuing just solutions in Bosnia. Tudjman provided the military instrument that brought the Serb terror to an end. Milosevic has brilliantly survived throughout by offering himself as the means of disciplining the Bosnian Serb regime, while never quite delivering. The Dayton accord was built on the foundation of Croatian military strength and Serbian diplomatic co-operation.

There are evident weaknesses in both the civilian and the military structures set up at Dayton. Nobody is in overall command of both. Carl Bildt has limited powers and resources and is obliged to pursue his purposes by subterfuge and by giving or withholding economic aid. Nevertheless, he represents the more activist school and is supported, intermittently, by European governments. The US military, which dominates the Implementation Force, is naturally inclined to take a minimalist view of its role. The Colin Powell doctrine of "bring the boys safe home" reigns supreme, and a model of policy based partly on the operation in northern Iraq is the preferred one.

BUT to imagine that this armed services view seriously conflicts with the purposes of the administration is foolish. The US army may be worried about losing soldiers if it tries to take Karadzic, but that is not the critical consideration. The critical consideration is what Washington thinks is possible, while keeping Milosevic on side. If that government wanted Karadzic arrested he *would* be arrested, and swiftly.

The hope with Dayton was always that in spite of all the compromises it made with evil men and with the evil facts as they were on the ground, it could set in motion processes that would begin to erode the power of those men and the permanence of those facts.

There are developments to be welcomed in former Yugoslavia. Tudjman has been chastised by his own constitutional court for suspending the opposition administration of Zagreb. Substantial numbers of Krajina Serbs are ready to go home and swear loyalty to the Croatian state. Haris Silajdzic's avowedly multi-ethnic Party for Bosnia is doing better than expected. Probably, Karadzic will be wholly outmanoeuvred sooner or later. But until the overall strategy in Washington and in European capitals is aimed at change throughout former Yugoslavia, this tendency for the better cannot be consistently reinforced.

Behind Michael Howard's clash with Britain's top judges last week lies an obsession with American-style, lock-'em-up justice. **Alan Travis** reports

FOR Britain's worst Home Secretary for 40 years, the charge that his "get tough" sentencing package has been stolen wholesale from America is not even a matter for debate: "I am not simply copying what has been done there," Michael Howard protests. "I am putting in place some very carefully targeted measures which learn from the experience of the United States."

This "new improved" British version of the American prison nightmare Howard is so keen to promote appears to stem more from a lifetime's love affair with the US than from any study of the criminal justice system.

"To say that imprisoning people has not worked simply flies in the face of the facts," he says.

Yet since he took office three years ago, Howard has ignored his own Home Office research which says the "incarceration effect" is so small that you need to increase the prison population by 25 per cent to cut crime by just 1 per cent. Instead of following this logic, he has advocated a range of US imports, including the introduction of boot camps and electronic tagging. He once even considered changing the name of the Probation Service to the Corrections Agency. His former deputy, Michael Forsyth, now Scottish Secretary, is introducing his own version of the Alabama chain gang.

It hasn't stopped there. American private prison companies have started to operate in Britain with Howard's encouragement. The Florida-based Wackenhut Corrections Corporation last month opened its new immigration detention centre at Gatwick Airport. The Corrections Corporation of America is already running British prisons.

So what is there in Howard's sentencing package that supports his contention that he is borrowing the "best of America's penal policies" and improving them? The principal measure is the introduction of mandatory minimum sentences which are meant to severely punish the career criminal.

The second major US import is the imposition of an automatic life sentence on those who are convicted of a second serious violent or sex crime. In the baseball terminology now being used to describe these things, this is "two strikes and you're out".

The baseball point is a clue to why Howard is so enthusiastic about all aspects of the US criminal justice system. The answer is simply that he is a Yankophile. His Who's Who entry lists his recreations as baseball (the New York Mets, who he gets to see at least once a summer).

While sitting in New York's Shea Stadium, it will not have escaped his notice that a "get tough" agenda has proved wildly popular among the electorate there. There's hardly an elected official left in the US who dares not embrace the slogan "Prison works".

So Howard presses on, hoping for the same populist results in Britain to help his beleaguered friend, John Major. The alarm bells, however, have started to ring at the highest levels of the Home Office. Already the prison population is at a record 54,481. In the last 17 years the Tory government has built 22 new prisons. Howard's plans will require another 22.

It will be a massive building programme. Now that the Channel tunnel is completed this new generation of prisons, costing billions, is set to become the largest single construction project under way in Britain.

"The judges are out of touch with the public" is the Government's justification. But if opinion polls are in future to be the only guiding light for criminal justice policy in Britain, as Howard argues, what then? Who will be able to resist pressure for the final "get tough" reform — the return of the hangman's noose?

America offers a bull market in jails

Prison is displacing baseball as the national US pastime, writes **Ian Katz** in New York

A NEW BREED of commodity trader has emerged in nineties' America. Like their counterparts dealing in pork bellies, they seek to match producers making too much with consumers who can't get enough. Only the nature of the commodity they deal in is different. It is prisoners.

Right now, Texas is importing. The state has just completed a massive prison-building spree and, for a few months at least, it has spare cells. It needs to fill them or thousands of jobs will be at risk. So "prisoner placement consultants" have found inmates from Colorado and Oregon, where the jails are filled to bursting.

On the face of it, the convict trade makes good sense. Why should cells stand empty while inmates in states like Arizona and New Jersey languish in tents? America, quite simply, is sending people to jail quicker than it can build new ones.

For two decades, US politicians in search of quick, politically saleable solutions to crime have vied to pass laws putting more villains in jail for longer. Obsessed thoughout the 1980s with its war on drugs, the federal government concentrated on ensuring that petty drug criminals would remain behind bars as long as many rapists or murderers. For their part, the states came up with snappy variations on the mandatory sentencing theme such as California's three-strikes-and-you're-out law, under which anyone convicted of a third major crime must serve 25 years to life.

The sporting allusion is apt, for prison is rapidly displacing baseball as America's national pastime. In December the US surpassed Russia for the first time as the world's number-one jailer with 565 out of every 100,000 Americans behind bars. (Britain locks up around 100.) The population of America's new corrections archipelago is exploding at a rate that would embarrass most Third World countries. Federal and state jails are packed with almost 1.5 million inmates, more than double the total in 1988. Texas alone has more prisoners than the entire country had in 1948.

Inside America's overcrowded prisons, the temperature is mounting. They gave up long ago on the national target of one prisoner to a cell. In California, among the most gung-ho in sentencing, the prisons are stuffed with almost double the number of inmates they were built for.

It is not as though prison authorities have not tried to keep up. The past two decades have seen the biggest prison-building boom in history. California, which built 17 jails in 15 years, has seen prison spending balloon from 2 per cent of the state budget to almost 10 per cent. The governor of Washington offers a grim prediction: if his state continues to build prisons at the rate it is going, every Washingtonian will either be working in a jail or held in one by 2056. America's prison fever has an economic momentum of its own. Small, cash-strapped towns compete to build new jails "on spec", confident that the nation's "get tough" mood will fill them and bring jobs and prosperity. Corporate giants invest millions in companies that run private prisons.

For the federal and state governments, however, the prison boom looks more like a bust. For the first time last year, California spent more on prisons than on higher education. The comparison is more than a curiosity because many states are looting their education coffers to build jails. According to a study by the Rand Corporation, California will spend 18 per cent of its state budget on prisons by 2000 if it continues to lock up its residents with such zeal. That would leave just 1 per cent for universities.

Advocates of mandatory sentencing argue it is a price worth paying to make America safer. With crime figures falling across the country — precipitously in cities like New York — "lock-'em-up politicians like California's governor Pete Wilson have been quick to claim the credit. But criminologists are divided over who or what is really winning the war against crime. Some suggest shifting demographics (fewer of those dangerous 18 to 25-year-olds) and changing drug preferences (less crack) have more to do with it than packed prisons.

The triumphalism of the hard time brigade is dampened by a widespread consensus among penologists that America is locking up the wrong people. Critics argue that the state and federal systems are being forced to release violent criminals to accommodate the frequently non-violent ones handed long prison terms under mandatory sentencing laws. In Florida, for instance, a profusion of heavy drug sentences means other criminals get out quicker.

The swamping of the federal prison system with comparatively petty offenders convicted under draconian anti-drug laws is the most striking result of the vogue for mandatory sentencing. Drug offenders now account for almost two-thirds of the federal prison population.

Widespread criticism of the drug laws by judges (and even the refusal of several to hear cases under them) has not dampened the federal government's enthusiasm for sentencing by formula; the sweeping anti-crime bill passed last year includes a federal three-strikes law to match those already in force in more than a dozen states, as well as $12.2 billion to build more prisons.

California's experiment with baseball justice hardly inspires confidence, however. Eight out of 10 of those locked up under the new law were convicted of non-violent offences on their second and third strikes. Manuel Peña, a 29-year-old convicted of shoplifting is not untypical. His $35.98 haul will cost him 25 years to life because of three earlier convictions for armed robbery.

Meanwhile, California's judicial system is creaking under the pressure. Because of the higher stakes involved, potential third strike defendants are demanding jury trials in far greater numbers. Since July 1994, 47 of the state's 125 civil courts have been pressed into action to hear criminal cases, creating a years-long backlog of civil litigation. There are other, less easily quantifiable, concerns. Los Angeles police chief Willie Williams has suggested that a spate of shootings of police officers reflects an increased desperation of potential three strikes defendants to avoid arrest.

While most US lawmakers have contented themselves with finding ways to put more people behind bars, others have devoted themselves to the parallel crusade of making prison life more unpleasant. The return of chain gangs to Alabama last year was one reflection of a wider move to make hard time just that. The US Congress is currently debating the No Frills Prison Act, a bill designed to achieve "the elimination of luxurious prison conditions". At the same time several states have passed so-called "truth in sentencing" laws aimed at keeping inmates in jail longer. Don't worry about selling those prison shares just yet.



Captive nation . . . nearly 1.5 million people are now packed into US prisons PHOTOGRAPH: P F BENTLEY

Putting trade in its proper place

Is globalisation a force for good in the world? Certainly not for workers, writes **Larry Elliott**



FAUCHON'S in the Place de la Madeleine in Paris is a gastronomic paradise. In the section devoted to fruit and veg there are dainties to whet the appetite of Parisian foodies — mangoes from Mali, maracujas from Colombia, kiwanos from Portugal.

This is the way the supporters of global liberalisation would have us believe it could be everywhere from Kuala Lumpur to Knightsbridge. It is taken as read that the meshing of free trade and unfettered capital flows lead to rising world prosperity and a way out of poverty for the developing world.

In reality, globalisation is to the world economy what monetarism is to the domestic economy. It represents the final triumph of capital over labour, since the corollary of the deregulation of finance is the shackling of trade unions. It means that national governments are left powerless in the face of multinationals who will relocate at the first whiff of interventionist policies.

The collapse of communism has helped embed this view. Capitalism is now the only game in town; since 1990 it has lacked the external challenge from an alternative ideology that once tempered its wildest excesses.

Last week the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development summed up current thinking when it said globalisation "gives all countries the possibility of participating in world development and all consumers the assurance of benefiting from increasingly vigorous competition between producers".

Yet these "consumers" are also workers, and here the Panglossian view of globalisation starts to break down. The UK government strained every sinew to prevent the OECD calling for the link between trade and labour standards to be discussed at the first ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Singapore later this year.

The United States thinks otherwise. It is insistent that trade should be linked to basic labour standards, and what the US wants it usually gets. Nobody should kid themselves that Washington's actions are determined by altruism: rather the US's approach is an amalgam of Bill Clinton's political expediency in the face of Pat Buchanan's blue-collar protectionism and the naked self-interest of big business. The US likes global rules and regulations in areas where it perceives that it is threatened by international competition, but wants all barriers removed where it is the dominant player.

For all that, the American stance is welcome, because it offers some hope that a human dimension can be added to the trade debate. In an election year, Clinton needs organised labour on his side, and the unions are rightly outraged when they see US companies being wooed to Bangladesh by adverts boasting that unions are outlawed and strikes illegal in special low-cost economic development zones.

Further, the debate over labour standards raises the question of whether the cut-throat, lowest common denominator approach has a long-term future. Trade was certainly one of the three pillars of the Golden Age of 1945-73 — along with Keynesianism and post-war reconstruction — but it was ordered trade developed within a framework of rules and capital controls.

Any challenge to globalisation requires an understanding of what we are dealing with. The theory is that liberalisation and deregulated capital flows allow countries to specialise in what they are good (or least bad) at, and this international division of labour raises global income. Free movement of capital leads to higher foreign investment and the diffusion of best practice. As a result, the developing countries that do best are those with the least state intervention and the freest trade and these new "tiger economies" pose a massive competitive threat to living standards in the developed world.

This last point is one of the keys to the whole debate. Globalisation is an important weapon for international capital because it keeps workers in their place and wages down.

In fact, as the American economist Paul Krugman has pointed out, the idea of global competition bearing down on Western living standards is a myth. Only around 5 per cent of exports to the West — Europe, North America and Japan — come from outside, and that percentage has actually fallen in recent years.

Professor Ajit Singh, of Cambridge University, goes further. He finds no evidence that globalisation has been good for us and, to the extent that it is symbiotically linked to deflationary macro-economic policies, it is positively harmful.

Prof Singh compares the past 15 years with the Golden Age of 1945-73 and concludes: "Under the market supremacy model of the 1980s and 1990s, liberalisation and globalisation in industrial countries have not resulted in increased long-term economic growth, nor are these likely to do so in the foreseeable future under the present policy regime."

This is a valid criticism. On almost any measure that real people could relate to — growth, unemployment, living standards, investment — the record of the past 20 years has been far poorer than in the Golden Age. But we're not supposed to care about that because capital is now footloose and fancy free and can lubricate development in all corners of the globe. In Mexico, for example.

Prof Singh does not advocate protectionism. Rather, he argues that the current euphoria for liberalism is potentially dangerous precisely because it could lead to a descent into the beggar-my-neighbour policies of the 1930s. On his reckoning, the Golden Age was not a fluke, but the consequence of the right policy choices and the creation of an appropriate institutional framework. This is unlikely to appeal to the new breed of free-marketeers, who see parallels between today and their own golden age of globalisation, from 1870 to 1914.

A counter view is provided in an Unctad paper by Paul Bairoch and Richard Kozul-Wright, which argues that the pre-first world war era was not one of trade liberalisation, nor of diminished expectations for the role of the state. Rather, just as with Japan in the 1960s and Korea in the 1980s, countries grew more rapidly after they became more protectionist. Countries that experienced huge capital inflows — such as Argentina — were often destabilised.

The paper's thrust is that pre-1914 was not a golden age of economic growth. Instead, the internationalisation of finance capital was associated with uneven development, often reinforcing existing differences in the world economy rather than bringing about convergence.

This revisionism is long overdue. Internationalism and trade are grand ideals, much to be preferred to nationalism and protectionism, but history suggests that growth and rising incomes lead to trade rather than the reverse.

There is life after downsizing

Sacking workers to boost efficiency and profits also helps create jobs, argues **Alex Brummer**

IN THE changing global economy of the last decade, the immediate refuge of any corporation failing to deliver to shareholders has been to "downsize". It has become the mantra which many Wall Street experts argue has driven the extraordinary bull markets of the decade.

But the long-held assumption that downsizing must be a good thing for industries — by sweeping away inefficiencies and improving productivity — is now being challenged. A great deal of the responsibility for the intellectual dispute can be laid at the door of the Republican presidential candidate, Pat Buchanan, who demonised IBM's boss Louis Gerstner as the person who downsized the workforce by 86,000 people in three years, while collecting remuneration which, with share options, could be worth $60 million.

The Buchanan intervention was among the motivators for the entry of the New York Times into the debate about downsizing, and the economic insecurity and dislocation it has triggered in middle America. Many of the same factors that have failed to produce the feel-good factor in the UK to save John Major's political hide have been troubling Americans too.

In February and March the New York Times published a seven-part series, The Downsizing Of America, which filled 25 densely typed broadsheet pages and totalled 45,000 words. With the help of some creative statistical work (which has since been challenged by some economists) it suggested that since the early 1970s some 43 million jobs have been lost in the US through downsizing.

The figure may have been spurious, but it was far too large for a politician as shrewd as Bill Clinton, who rode into office on the economic-insecurity ticket, to ignore. While the Republicans fought it out on the hustings, Clinton ordered the White House group which coordinates economic policy to undertake a formal study of downsizing, the first to be attempted by a Western government.

The Clinton study, headed by the chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers, Dr Joseph Stiglitz, is being eagerly awaited in the US and could become a key text in this autumn's election campaign. Ahead of its publication some downsizing gurus are already re-positioning themselves. Stephen Roach of Morgan Stanley, one of the great driving forces behind the concept of downsizing as an investing tool, is among those doing some re-thinking. In some much-quoted comments Roach has now asserted: "If you compete by building, you have a future. If you compete by cutting, you don't."

Even some corporate chieftains now appear to recognise that there are points to be won by joining the anti-downsizing forces. The chairman of the Union Bank of Switzerland, Robert Studer, using words which have become unfamiliar in UK privatised companies, argues that firms which concentrate solely on the short-term interests of shareholders could endanger their ability to compete and even survive.

Certainly companies need to deal with their workforces sensitively. But the experience of the 1990s suggests that those economies, as in Britain and the US, where companies have ruthlessly pursued downsizing, have increased their competitiveness *vis-à-vis* their rivals. Moreover, despite putting hundreds of thousands of people temporarily on the dole queues, they have been successful in bringing overall unemployment down and defeating the sclerosis which has overshadowed the jobs-for-life European and Japanese economies.

Anyone hoping that the upcoming White House study will definitively redefine the economic agenda by emphasising the negatives of downsizing is in for a nasty shock. The Stiglitz study has reached the conclusion that the downsizing of corporate America, far from being a disaster, may have been positive for the economy. In contrast to the mythology of the stump, people who have lost their jobs in the 1990s have been more quickly absorbed into the workforce than those who lost their jobs a decade earlier. Moreover, while those employees who have been downsized have taken wage cuts — on average 14 per cent in the period 1981-93 — this is a far smaller pay reduction than some of the figures (which range up to 40 per cent) in the public arena.

In fact, the Clinton study is said to show that 68 per cent of all the new jobs created over the past two years in the US have been in industries that pay above-average wages, such as high technology and finance.

The Stiglitz study is provoking a ferocious debate. Robert Reich, the US Labour Secretary, is urging that economic insecurity be aggressively tackled. But the US Treasury Secretary, Robert Rubin, suggests that the existing mechanisms are fine. He is, of course, right. The US jobless rate, now hovering at 5.6 per cent of the workforce, is the envy of most of leading industrialised nations. Downsizing has affected almost all the corporations in the upper echelons of the Dow Jones index, which have become more efficient and profitable, delivering not just job losses but new opportunities.

One may wince at the thought of another 10,000 jobs going at British Gas. But in flexible labour markets such transformations of the industrial landscape can now be absorbed.

North Korea Pilot Defects To the South

Mary Jordan in Tokyo

A NORTH KOREAN MiG-19 fighter pilot defected to South Korea last week with a daring flight across one of the world's most heavily armed borders that set off air raid sirens near Seoul.

"I couldn't live under the North Korean system anymore," Capt. Lee Chul Soo, 30, said on live television after he landed at a military base south of Seoul, escorted by South Korean air force jets.

The defection, which sent shudders through Seoul, was the most dramatic of hundreds in recent years and the first by a pilot since 1983. It added weight to speculation that dissatisfaction and unrest are growing in North Korea and that the demise of the world's last Stalinist state may not be far off.

North Korea, increasingly isolated and impoverished, is so short of food, electricity and cash that many American military leaders say the question is not whether it will collapse, but when. The Soviet designed MiG, dating from the early 1960s, illustrates how outdated the North Korean war machine has become, said Jim Coles, spokesman for the U.S. military in Seoul.

Coles said the North Koreans have about 750 fighter jets, a few of them relatively modern but most of them MiGs with technology dating back as far as the 1950s. In a war, they would be pitted against South Korea's much more modern U.S.-built jet fighters, including the F-16, among the most advanced in the world. The U.S. military also has about 100 F-16s based in South Korea; none were involved in last week's activity.

The blaring sirens in cities west of Seoul and live national television news coverage began shortly after South Korean military radar spotted the North Korean jet near unauthorized air space about 10:50am on Thursday last week. The pilot had left a military base in western North Korea and was flying over the Yellow Sea toward South Korea. President Kim Young Sam ordered an investigation into why air raid sirens in Seoul failed to sound during the incident.

Fighter jets were immediately dispatched to intercept the intruder. When they met him as he entered South Korean airspace, Lee rocked his wings and made other internationally recognized signals that he intended to surrender. The South Korean pilots escorted Lee around Seoul and led him to Suwon Air Base in the city's southern suburbs.

Lee told reporters after his landing that he left behind his father, 62; his wife, 27; his son, 5; and his daughter, 3. State Department human rights reports say that the families of defectors often are sent to harsh political prisons.

The Korean Broadcasting System said that Lee would be entitled to a sizable reward for defecting and bringing in a plane, but the South Korean government would not confirm that report.

South Korean soldiers guard a MiG-19 fighter at Suwon airbase after a pilot defected from the North with the plane last week PHOTOGRAPH: YUN SUIK-BONG

Yeltsin Plays the Good Czar

Lee Hockstader in Moscow

WHEN HE visited the gigantic Fronza collective farm in southwestern Russia a few weeks ago, President Boris Yeltsin did not arrive empty-handed. These days, only a few weeks before the presidential election, he rarely does.

Brandishing the fat fountain pen that has become a fixture of his re-election campaign, Yeltsin signed a decree granting the farm a brand-new truck. He handed over the papers, smiled his beaming smile and, clearly relishing his campaign persona as the good czar, bid the farmers farewell. A week later the truck arrived from the factory.

So will the farmers' vote for Yeltsin in the June 16 presidential election? Don't count on it. "We should have asked for more, five or 10 trucks," said Nikolai Vesloguzov, the farm's deputy director. He plans to vote for Yeltsin's Communist rival, Gennady Zyuganov.

Said a truck driver at the farm, also named Nikolai: "What has [Yeltsin] done right? The bad has been worse than the good."

Gauging voters' views is still difficult in Russia, but according to the polling data available, Yeltsin has roared back from single-digit approval ratings last winter to draw ahead of Zyuganov and into first place. His campaign, though poorly organised, is an awesome display of the immense power of the Russian presidency — a whirlwind of pork-barrel politics, extravagant spending promises and budget-busting tax breaks.

The Russian leader has left no constituency unstroked, no problem untouched. One day he meets with former dissidents in an effort to patch up his ragged relations with liberals. The next day he dispatches his foreign minister to see Cuban President Fidel Castro, thereby courting hard-line conservatives who want Russia to rekindle old Soviet friendships.

At Yeltsin's command, back wages are being paid. Pensions have been increased. There have been initiatives to help miners, home buyers, defense plants, Muslims, children in the North, retirees bilked of their savings and students on skimpy stipends.

And with the formidable help of Russian television, which is still mostly government controlled and does Yeltsin's bidding on the evening news, he has run political circles around most of his opponents.

"To be successful Yeltsin had to change his image, to become a new man," wrote the newspaper Kaliningradskaya Pravda. "And this is exactly what he is doing."

Said Michael Caputo, an American political consultant who has worked on Republican campaigns in the United States, "The only Western-standard political campaign being run here is Yeltsin's."

Yet for all his campaign-trail activism, Yeltsin, 65, plainly still is running scared. Many regard with suspicion the polls that predict he is in the lead and say the polls overstate the president's support. Yeltsin's campaign managers, who conduct their own polling, are said to believe that he is running neck-and-neck with Zyuganov, 51.

That means he is likely to face Zyuganov in a second-round, runoff election as early as July 7, but who would win is anyone's guess. In interviews outside Moscow, Yeltsin's natural base of support, many Russians say they may end up voting for the president — but only if there is no way to avoid it. What each candidate does and says in the closing weeks of the election could easily tip the balance, analysts say.

What seems certain is that the Russian leader will continue to use his tremendous advantages of incumbency to full effect.

At the weekend, in a trip to the far north, Yeltsin handed out favors and cash like a munificent ward boss whose precinct spanned 11 time zones. "I've come with full pockets," he told voters in the port city of Arkhangelsk. "Today, a little money will be coming to the Arkhangelsk region."

The next day, like Santa Claus descending from the North Pole, he was off to the frozen mining city of Vorkuta. There, he declared that miners who hadn't been paid since February would receive a $26 million package that would cover their back wages — part of $6 billion in spending since the beginning of the year to cover overdue salaries.

To remake his image of a sickly old man with a drinking problem, Yeltsin's handlers had him wade into crowds with a wireless microphone, banter with voters, descend into a coal mine and rock back and forth on a wooden swing with a delighted young girl swinging behind him.

"His paternalism and populism . . . have helped restore the image of a strong, charismatic and confident leader," wrote Gherman Diligensky, head of the Center for Comparative Social and Political Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

It has also threatened to wreck Russia's already fragile budget for 1996. Western economists have warned that Yeltsin's spending pledges and tax breaks, coupled with sluggish tax collections so far this year, could spark inflation and sour Moscow's $10 billion loan deal from the International Monetary Fund. The IMF deal sets maximum quarterly deficit targets, which Yeltsin's lavish promises could jeopardize.

At the weekend, Economics Minister Yevgeny Yasin warned that Yeltsin's promises could trigger an economic crisis after the election. "Total payment of wage arrears to government workers and of back pensions is absolutely unrealistic," he wrote in a letter to Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Meanwhile, Yeltsin has maneuvered skillfully to keep his adversaries off balance. In talks this month with his liberal challenger Grigory Yavlinsky, the president did not reach his ostensible goal of forming a united, pro-reform coalition. But he did manage to make his rival look venal by announcing Yavlinsky had insisted on being named prime minister as his price for an alliance. Yavlinsky, wounded, was forced to deny it.

In what many believe is a dirty-tricks campaign orchestrated by Yeltsin's camp, mysterious articles that have outraged the Communists have appeared in the overtly pro-Yeltsin press.

"Yeltsin has enormous resources to corrupt and buy everyone," said Evgeny Volk, the Moscow representative of the Heritage Foundation. "No one can compete with him in this department."

Two Lucky Strikes For Tobacco

EDITORIAL

OPPONENTS of the tobacco industry took two blows on Thursday last week. The first was probably more discouraging than the second. It came in the form of a report issued by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which announced that the proportion of high school students who reported having smoked within the previous 30 days had increased from 27.5 percent in 1991 to 34.8 percent last year. Figures for African American boys in grades 9 through 12 were particularly disappointing. The percentage of smokers in this group has almost doubled in that time period.

The second piece of news sent investors scrambling to buy tobacco stocks and had lawyers and company executives on the smoke circuit celebrating. A three-judge panel on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit reversed a lower court that had granted class-action status to a suit filed against tobacco companies by four named plaintiffs.

If the creation of the class had been sustained, the plaintiffs would have included anyone who smokes or ever smoked — tens of millions of Americans — and the potential losses in the billions of dollars might have put the industry out of business. That, of course, is the ultimate objective of tobacco foes, though surely the 60 law firms that put together and financed this action would have been happy to win record fees, too.

The judges reasoned that the lawsuit presented issues too novel and diverse to be settled in a single action. The differing laws of many states would have been involved and the interests of millions of individuals at stake. The litigation, in short, would have been unmanageable.

Such a finding is not unreasonable. And it still leaves the industry's adversaries with many weapons. They can appeal this ruling, though they have not yet decided to do so. They can proceed with this case in federal court on behalf of the named four plaintiffs. And they can file new class-action cases in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. The industry, meanwhile, must also continue to fight attempts at further government regulation, new suits by secondhand smoke victims and actions already filed by eight states and contemplated by others to recoup Medicaid costs incurred caring for the poor with tobacco-related illnesses.

Tobacco stocks may have gone up last week. The nicotine merchants may have been cheered by the data on teen-agers. But in the long run, the industry continues to face challenges in court, increasing intervention by the government and mounting evidence on the deadly nature of its product.

Syria's Strongman Is on Losing Streak

COMMENT
Stephen S. Rosenfeld

NO GLOBAL troublemaker is more widely cultivated than President Hafez Assad of Syria. It is not simply that this tyrant, sometime obstructor of peace and patron of terrorism and drug trafficking has won American indulgence by cooperating in his fashion in the Gulf War and sometimes in the search for Middle East peace. He has been practically canonized by successive American administrations as a tactician of surpassing shrewdness and as an instructor in *Realpolitik* in the world classroom. Yet a close look at these laurels shows them to be a joke.

Yes, you could say that in the Cold War years he found Syria a place in the Middle East sun — although the finding was a showy substitute for reclaiming the real territory he had lost in war. But where is he lately? These days Syria is not merely isolated and friendless, except for Iran. It is, as Andrew Rathmell demonstrates in Middle East International, encircled by countries that are more or less regional stalwarts in their own right and that are ever more closely tied to an ever more closely involved United States.

Syria's most formidable neighbors, Turkey and Israel, fill this bill. Assad is left to sponsor politically costly terrorist raids on the two of them. This policy, moreover, further alienates Syria from the United States, the one country Assad had it in mind to enlist as a strategic comrade as Soviet power drained away.

Jordan is being brought openly into both the American and Israeli strategic orbits. For several years, the new Palestine has been consolidating an independence from Syria that previously Assad had made unthinkable. The recent Israeli pounding of civilian Lebanon advertised his inability to protect his single client.

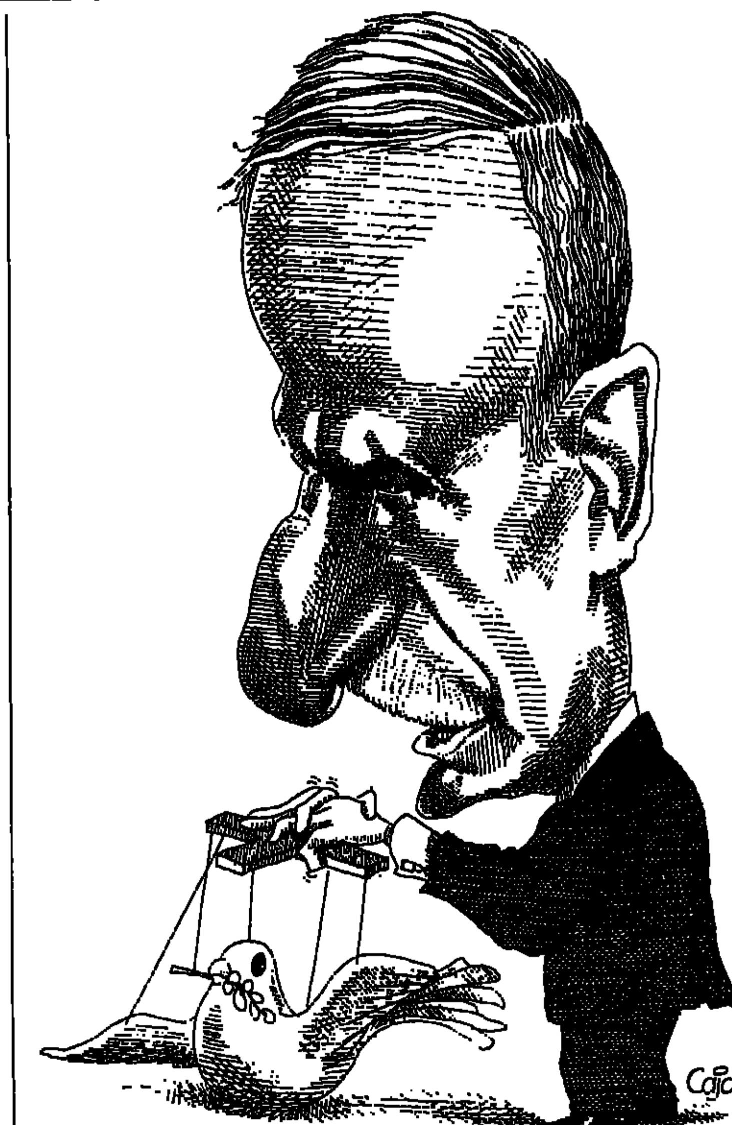
It is bad enough that Assad, if he ever had to meet Israeli power again, would have to do so alone. He has also lost his great patron and principal arms supplier, the Soviet Union, and — in a startling lapse for someone who is lauded as a connoisseur of geopolitics — he has done so without managing to arrange any serviceable alternative.

By his overall performance, he has now come close to convincing even the most prominent current advocate of his availability as a regional interlocutor, Secretary of State Warren Christopher, that he may not be so available after all. He has steadily undercut the never-large part of the Israeli public ready to contemplate a swap of the Golan Heights for a peace with Syria.

The argument for engaging with Syria was always that, whatever else it was, it was a power that had to be dealt with — the old hold-your-nose argument. But Syria is now a much reduced power that remains ready to play the spoiler but seems unprepared for the heavy political lifting at home that it would take to fit it out for a serious peace initiative. Loser gets Syria.

Why then would the United States, Israel or anyone else think there was much to gain from dealing with Assad? It is not a question of the price. Nor is it a question of his ruthlessness. What can the Damascus strongman actually deliver now that he has discredited the old stereotype of his caginess and centrality?

Go to the source, veteran strategist Albert Wohlstetter concludes, to the Syrian sources of terrorism. He would have Israel bomb Syrian war-making targets. He would have the United States end all pragmatic "partnerships with terrorists" of the sort that Washington has pursued with Syria over the decades.



Mideast specialist Daniel Pipes hopefully suggests that a tougher American line would not only facilitate a Syrian-Israeli peace but would also enable the West to draw Syria into a coalition of the willing against the threat of radical fundamentalism.

I am not ready to see the United States altogether break with Syria. The Israeli election cycle needs to be played out, and the American cycle, and the Russian cycle. An abrupt policy turn at this late date in the current Clinton term would only be confusing.

But the new coordinates of regional power are there to be recognized. It is a cumulative, improvised thing and there is no "doctrine" of it, but the United States, Israel and other friendly and dependent states have been constructing a Mideast strategic order that extends from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, contains Iraq and Iran and leaves Syria exposed — half in, half out. Some call it a post-Cold War Pax Americana. It carries some risks of political and military overreaching, but it also offers the United States a useful measure of bargaining and security advantage in an uncertain place and time.

A Lack of Maternal Instinct

OPINION
Charles Krauthammer

NANCY MINER wanted to give birth to her baby at home. The fact that she was 39, that this was her first child, that there was no electricity in her "rustic Middleburg cottage" did not daunt her. Assisting her were her husband, a friend and a lay midwife. During delivery, the baby's umbilical cord became compressed. The baby died. The midwife has now been charged with manslaughter.

Lay midwifery is not certified and not legal in Virginia, but the midwife's lawyer says she should not be held liable because she was simply doing what the parents wanted. I'm with the lawyer. If there was real justice in this world, it is the parents who would be in the dock, charged with criminal self-indulgence.

"This case is all about the rights of parents to make decisions about the welfare of their children," says Erin Fulham, a Maryland nurse and member of Maryland Friends of Midwives. Welfare of the children? If Nancy Miner had had the slightest concern about the welfare of her child, she would have had it in a hospital where, when the breech birth and compressed cord had been discovered, she could have had an emergency C-section and a good chance of saving her child.

Miner protests in her own defense that "Everyone was born at home a generation ago. Now they act like it is outrageous." More like 80 years ago, but no matter. Yes, 80 years ago babies were born at home. And they died in droves. Almost one in 10 newborns died then. Less than one in a hundred does now.

Yes, childbirth used to be natural. But so was the accompanying death, disability, deformity and disease. A parent's duty is to avoid these "natural" phenomena by all possible means. Today we have those means. They are called modern medicine.

The whole natural childbirth phenomenon is an astonishing triumph of ideology over experience. Pain is normally — indeed, "naturally" — something humans try to avoid. And the pain of childbirth is among life's most searing. It is also, today, entirely unnecessary.

In the '60s and '70s natural childbirth made a comeback, fueled by a peculiar combination of New Age mysticism and macho feminism. Today, thankfully, some feminist writers argue that hospital childbirth is all right, that it is not a betrayal of sisterhood, that there is no earthly reason to willfully embrace pain for the mother and danger for the child as a protest of the alleged patriarchal structure and technological tyranny of modern medicine. They could usefully use as text the case of Nancy Miner.

I will no doubt be charged with lack of sympathy for a bereaved mother. I plead guilty. I reserve my sympathy instead for the lost child.

The Miners have every right to be Luddites, free spirits, foes of modern technology. But the original 18th-century industrial saboteurs sought to destroy the satanic textile mills by throwing their wooden shoes (sabots) into the machines. They didn't throw their children.

Familiar Faces in Nicaraguan Election

Douglas Farah in Managua

THE FORMER president is running. So is the former vice president. So are the former mayor, former combat heroes from both sides of the civil war, the president's former chief of staff and son-in-law, and the former central bank president.

Just about everyone who was anyone in Nicaragua's recent history, it seems, is running for president in the October election. The candidates — about a dozen at last count — and the viciousness of the campaign underscore a deep polarization in Nicaraguan politics.

The winner will succeed President Violeta Chamorro, who took over from the Sandinista National Liberation Front six years ago when the country lay devastated by the civil war that had raged throughout the 1980s. The Sandinistas, who overthrew the right-wing Somoza dynasty in 1979, battled Contra guerrillas, who were funded by the United States. A peace plan in 1990 led to the free election that made Chamorro president.

Her government of national reconciliation brought economic stability and returned Nicaragua's conflicts to the political arena. But it alienated many people with inefficiency and alleged corruption. Unemployment and underemployment hover around 60 percent, and Nicaragua remains one of the poorest nations in the hemisphere.

Despite furious campaigning, several recent polls show more than half the voters are dissatisfied with the crop of candidates and are looking for someone else. What makes the political fragmentation hard to grasp is that all candidates essentially agree that the only hope for economic recovery lies in continuing Chamorro's economic austerity program, essential to receiving international aid.

"People are desperate for a new face, someone who has not been burned," said Carlos Fernando Chamorro, the president's son. "If there were an alliance of the center parties, it could take off."

The front-runner, Arnoldo Aleman, is a former Liberal Party mayor of Managua and widely accused of being a Somoza sympathizer. Most polls project he would get about a third of the vote.

Former president Daniel Ortega, a Sandinista who governed from 1979 to 1990, is second in most polls, with about a quarter of the vote. Ortega, who lost to Chamorro in 1990 as a Marxist who expropriated thousands of properties in the name of the revolution, now preaches the sanctity of private property and investment.

Antonio Lacayo, Chamorro's son-in-law and until recently her chief of staff, threw his hat in the ring, representing a continuation of the Chamorro government. But he has not passed 5 percent in the polls.

Eden Pastora, a Sandinista war hero who quit to fight with the Contras, also is running. So is Ortega's former vice president, Sergio Ramirez, who now blasts Ortega as too "orthodox" and calls himself a social democrat.

The Contras formed the Nicaraguan Resistence Party, but have split into several factions and candidates. Haroldo Montealegre, publisher of the conservative La Tribuna newspaper, is running as an economic libertarian.

One candidate, Alvaro Robelo, seemed to have a chance to break through the crowded field before he burned out in a campaign that was unusual, even by Nicaraguan standards. Robelo exploded on the political scene in January, founding the Up With Nicaragua party with loads of cash and promises to lure billions of dollars of investment to Nicaragua.

Living in Italy, Robelo was named representative of the Contras there in the late 1980s. With Chamorro's election in 1990 he was named ambassador, but was removed in 1993 and returned to Nicaragua. Here, he helped found the Banco Europea de Centroamerica and serves as vice president. By April, the party was solidly in third place, consistently polling above 10 percent. Then things began to fall apart.

In late April, Italian prosecutor Davide Monti charged that Robelo's bank was part of a scheme to launder $12.5 billion. Monti said $970 million had moved through the bank, something other bankers find hard to believe because bank assets in Nicaragua total about $1 billion.

The government announced in late April it was investigating Robelo. Robelo, who declined to be interviewed, has denied everything. He claimed he was at the center of a plot by rival candidate Lacayo and conspirators in international intelligence agencies.

Jobs Are Among the Casualties of War

Christine Spolar in Sarajevo

THE MEN sit on wooden benches, wander the streets and fill the wobbly plastic chairs of the outdoor cafés here, searching for the one sign that they say will lead them from war to peace: "Help Wanted."

Ibrahim Hadzidedic, an electrical engineer who once ran a factory and lived a good life in Banja Luka, looks for a job where he can use his management skills. Boris Djukanovic, who gave up his home in the Serb stronghold of Pale to fight for Bosnia, slips across former front lines to trade with one-time enemies. Kemal Becirevic, a former soldier whose family exhausted its life savings of $40,000 to buy bread, meat and milk through four years of war, doggedly knocks on doors and talks to old friends, taking the pulse of a staggered economy.

"Will there ever be any money here?" asked Becirevic, 37, who was released from the Bosnian army in February. "That's the question everyone asks. Everyone is looking for work, for money to start work."

Five months after the fighting ended, the battle for survival in Bosnia is being waged at the unemployment line. About eight of every 10 people are jobless, according to the World Bank. The average income hovers at about $500 a year, a quarter of what it was before the war. Sarajevo, once the economic center of the most diverse republic in Yugoslavia, is a crumbling dust bowl, where plastic sheeting flutters from apartment windows and electrical lines dangle in disrepair.

Foreign donors lined up in April to pledge $1.23 billion in economic aid to change the face of the ravaged Balkans, bringing the total pledged this year to $1.8 billion, including $281.7 million from the United States. Public works projects, such as repairing trolley tracks and the tattered roof of the High Court building, have been tapped as the quickest way to infuse some much-needed money — and salaries — into the economy.

But for those waiting for the first milepost of progress, the past few months have been some of the most frustrating in four years. In spring, as the sun drew people from their homes and tens of thousands of soldiers walked free as required by the peace agreement brokered in Dayton, Ohio, the sheer number of men on the streets of Sarajevo set off a visible distress signal.

"So far, all we've heard are promises," said Ibrahim Jusufvranic, whose city's transportation department awaits $50,000 in aid to be able to hire 59 men and repair two miles of trolley track from the outskirts of Sarajevo to the suburb of Ilidza. "People want to work. But we'll believe the money when we see it."

The cobblestone streets of historic Old Town are jammed with men like Hadzidedic. The handsome, mustachioed 48-year-old walks slowly, searching for faces he might recognize, someone who might have a job.

Hadzidedic once worked at Rudi Cajavec, an electronic plant in Banja Luka in northern Bosnia. A university graduate, he had risen to the post of production director, training in Massachusetts and returning to push the company to become one of the most productive in Yugoslavia.

That life ended in Banja Luka when all managers who were not Serbs were laid off in May 1992. Within a year, 18 mosques were blasted to rubble there and Muslims scrambled to survive. Hadzidedic and his family escaped by paying thousands of dollars to Serb authorities who let them leave for asylum in Sweden.

For the next three years, Hadzidedic, his wife and two teenage sons spent their days following the refugee program set up by the Swedish government. They could not work, but they could learn. So for eight hours a day, he studied Swedish and English, mathematics and computers.

Frustrated by the regimen, Hadzidedic tried to join the Bosnian army but he said he was told his family's aid would be jeopardized. Two months ago he came back to Bosnia and made his way alone by bus from Bihac to Sarajevo, stopping at factories and businesses in hopes of finding a job. His family will follow, he said, if he finds success.

"All I want now," Hadzidedic said, "is a job where I use my talents — and that will be a problem. There are no factories . . . When there's not enough electricity and water for most flats, how will there be enough to run the businesses?"

Boris Djukanovic, a Serb, will not wait for anyone to tell him when he can work or where. He was living in Pale when the first shots were fired in 1992. But he and his Muslim wife had run family businesses: an ice cream transport business in Pale and a shoe store in Sarajevo. They decided Sarajevo would be the only place where they and their young son could survive.

Within months, Djukanovic closed the shoe shop and sent his wife and child to Germany to escape the shelling. For the next four years, he wandered the hills here, fighting Bosnian Serbs.

In April, the onetime warrior clinched a deal, on a remote hillside outside Sarajevo, with one of those Serbs. The Serb will supply him with calculators, and he will sell them for $3 apiece alongside the black leather women's shoes he imports from Slovenia.

"For me, the war was stupid," Djukanovic said. "I was just waiting for it to end so I could start a new beginning. The only important thing now is that we work . . . Business is the only thing that can help to erase this war."

Djukanovic recently opened his shop — named Sani for the 9-year-old son he has not seen for years. He had to rebuild the wooden counter, shelves and doors, dipping into the small cash reserve he still has left. Nothing was left from the war years.

"If I could get some money from the state or some credit, it would be good," Djukanovic said. "But I don't know when or how that will happen."

Mexico: A Nation Hovering on the Brink

Nora Lustig

BORDERING ON CHAOS
Guerrillas, Stockbrokers, Politicians, and Mexico's Road to Prosperity
By Andres Oppenheimer
Little Brown. 367pp. $25.95

COMMENTING on Mexico's out of the ordinary events of the last couple of years, the Colombian Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez said: "Let us throw our books to the sea; reality has surpassed us." And, indeed, the recent history of Mexico has been delivering a stream of unprecedented stories for the media, and probably inspiring more than one fiction writer and movie-maker.

Starting with a peasant guerrilla uprising in Chiapas on the first day of 1994, the assassinations of the governing party's — the PRI's — presidential candidate in March and of the party's secretary general in September, and closing with the most serious financial crisis in decades in December, 1994 was a trying one for Mexico's people and institutions.

The next year — 1995 — brought additional shocking news: the arrest of the brother of former president Carlos Salinas accused of masterminding the murder of the PRI's secretary general and who — now try to follow this — had been protected in an earlier investigation by the victim's brother, the one-time special prosecutor for the case. Moreover, the arrest of a second man connected to the assassination of the PRI's presidential candidate raised fears of a plot, and former president Salinas's erratic behavior, such as going on hunger-strike after his brother's arrest, brought recurrent shock waves to Mexico's volatile financial markets.

Bordering On Chaos is a lively narration of Andres Oppenheimer's firsthand experience covering some of these events as a correspondent for the Miami Herald. His anecdotes capture well Mexico's darkest side. But, the problem with the book is that it does not provide a balanced description of Mexico and, hence, read alone, Bordering On Chaos is misleading.



Electioneering . . . During the Mexican presidential elections in 1988, which brought in Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the electoral authority refused to release the results for days PHOTOGRAPH: LISA TAYLOR

Take for example the guerrilla uprising in Chiapas. Oppenheimer devotes five of the 16 chapters to the Chiapas uprising but mentions the peace process only once, and in a footnote. In the 1970s there was a similar peasant-based guerrilla movement in the state of Guerrero that was "quietly" annihilated by the government. In Chiapas — in contrast — fighting was halted 10 days after the uprising started, and ever since then there have been several rounds of negotiations that may conclude in a sustainable peaceful resolution of the conflict. It certainly deserves more than a footnote.

In the chapter dedicated to the elections in August 1994, Oppenheimer sarcastically criticizes their description as the cleanest in Mexico's history. Nobody can deny that the political and electoral playing field in Mexico is still grossly tilted in favor of the PRI. However, in comparison with the past, the 1994 elections probably were a significant improvement as part of a broader process of political reform. They were certainly cleaner than the 1988 presidential elections when, for several days, the electoral authority refrained from releasing any results. Silence followed the first results that revealed that candidate Cuauhtemoc Cardenas was ahead in Mexico City, for example. Silence prevailed forever when the ballot boxes kept in the basement of the Mexican Congress were burnt a few years later.

Some of the stories that Oppenheimer tells us are not new to Mexico. What is new is that they are no longer secret and the kind of activity they portray is no longer tolerated. What is new in 1995 is that Raul Salinas — the brother of the former president — no longer enjoyed the traditional impunity granted to former presidents and their family, but was arrested and accused with committing serious crimes, such as masterminding an assassination. A balanced description of the changes in Mexico's political system would have been helpful to a readership eager to learn about Mexico's political transition.

Oppenheimer's analysis of economic issues is overly simplistic and, at times, inaccurate. Arguing that before the Zapatista rebellion Chiapas laborers "could not easily find work as field hands elsewhere in Mexico: a flood of cheap corn and wheat imports from the United States since the start of NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was hurting Mexican farmers badly" is incorrect. How could NAFTA hurt Mexican farmers before it was implemented (remember that the Chiapas uprising happened on the first day of NAFTA)? More important, before NAFTA the problem was the opposite: A large portion of modern agriculture in the north of the country had shifted to corn — highly protected from foreign competition — at the expense of employment-intensive export crops. Labor conditions and work opportunities in Chiapas were indeed terrible but for different reasons.

On the peso crisis, Oppenheimer argues that the government committed two "fatal" mistakes in December 1994. Accepting that policy could have been handled better, the "errors of December" — as they are known in Mexico — cannot be burdened with all the blame for the crisis. The peso crisis is the result of a combination of factors, some of which occurred earlier. Moreover, the magnitude of the crisis had much less to do with policy mistakes than with the characteristics of today's international capital markets.

Without the U.S.-led rescue package, the reaction of the markets would have led Mexico — and maybe other countries as well — to a financial collapse. The book does not mention anything about the fact that given the size of economic hardships in 1995, political combativeness has been notoriously mild and the government has been able to implement the required financial stabilization measures — inevitably painful as they are — with ease.

In a book dedicated to collecting practically all the salient destabilizing aspects of Mexico's recent past there is one notable omission: the analysis of the assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio, Salinas's hand picked presidential candidate. It is remarkable that Colosio's murder is mentioned tangentially when it is perhaps the most important political cause of the peso débâcle — Mexico's dollar reserves fell by close to $11 billion following the assassination — and its implications affect every dimension of Mexico's political life. If anything brought Mexico closer to chaos, it was Colosio's assassination. If anything will produce recurrent bouts of uncertainty and instability, it is the investigation of this crime.

Fading Relics of the Old Aristocracy

Jonathan Yardley

MASON'S RETREAT
By Christopher Tilghman
Random House. 290pp. $22

CHRISTOPHER Tilghman has accomplished, in Mason's Retreat, no mean feat: he has managed to meet, in his first novel, all the very high expectations that were raised by his previous book, a collection of short stories called In A Father's Place. Published six years ago, that was an uncommon book, all the more so for being its author's first; it was a work of impressive maturity — at the time Tilghman was in his mid-forties — and it left many readers eager to see what he could do at greater length and with more ambitious purposes.

The answer is Mason's Retreat, a quiet but powerful book about a family whose once-high fortunes are gradually petering out. It is set, as were many of the stories in In A Father's Place, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

His title has a double edge. Literally, it refers to the Retreat, a tatterdemalion estate that has been left to Edward Mason by his late Aunt Mary. Metaphorically, it refers to the retreat from positions of power and grace not merely by the Masons but by all the old WASP aristocrats who once ruled not merely the Eastern Shore but the nation itself.

The story of the Masons clearly is meant to be read for its metaphorical overtones, but it is story enough in and of itself. It takes place in the years from 1936 to 1939, with occasional references both backward and forward, and thus is set at a time when the nation was about to be dragged, all unwittingly, not merely into world war but also into a prolonged period of traumatic change after which almost nothing would be the same as it was before.

Edward and Edith Mason are genteel people trying to hold together a difficult marriage. They are living in England, where Edward runs a manufacturing business in Manchester that hovers at the edge of failure. Edward has a long history of extramarital episodes but has, he says, sworn off further straying; Edith's patience has been sorely tried, but at heart she loves her husband and she is determined to protect their two sons, the secretive and oversensitive Sebastien, who is 14, and the tender, loving Simon, who is 6.

Poised at the brink of failure, Edward decides to pull up their British roots and relocate in Maryland, a place about which no one in his little branch of the family knows a thing: "Edward did not claim to have ever been to the farm, a thousand-acre estate called — impossibly — the Retreat. He knew only that it had been in his family since his forebears escaped England during the Cromwellian revolution, and that it had been willed to him, as the family's oldest son, by a maiden great aunt." It turns out to be a white elephant: a dairy farm barely running and an immense Victorian mansion — "squat, ugly as a toad" — whose rooms are crowded with dilapidated chattels.

The Masons are discouraged but not deterred. It is not long before Sebastien has discovered the joys of farming and made himself companionable to McCready, the farm's manager, and Robert, his black helper; before Simon has made friends in town and endeared himself to the household help; before Edith has found herself, much to her surprise, at rest and at peace, having surrendered to the farm's rhythms. Only Edward remains at sea. He is determined to make the best of it, but his heart is in England and his talents, such as they are, are ill-suited to agriculture and the supervision of the people who practice it. Edith sympathizes with him, but she knows all too well that he is capable of veering off onto wild and profitless tangents, and she looks to the future "with a vague sense of doom."

As it turns out the family's crisis is set off by a moment of genuine opportunity. Edward is called back to England because the need for armaments has suddenly pulled his factory into the black. He leaves in high excitement, eager "to begin work, to remake himself at age forty-two, to take up the challenge tendered to him by fate, and by his wife." But the rest of the family stays at the Retreat, "among the cultivations and harvests, the tides and winds, the flat-opened invitations of the land and water," and Edward is missed scarcely at all.

Trouble appears in the form of Tom Hazelton, a handsome young man from Baltimore. Edith's response to his insistent overtures is the first of several changes in the family's life from which there can be no return, changes that force Edward back from England and Sebastien into an act of rebellion that has terrible consequences. In time Edward comes to see "this place [as] not a gift from Miss Mary Mason, but a trap, a spider web, a curse, her last spiteful legacy to those who had made her what she was."

Mason's Retreat comes close to being a tragedy in the classic sense, as Edward's fatal flaw of self-absorption blinds him to his family's needs. If it does not finally quite reach such heights, it goes high enough to make large claims for itself as a work of surpassing thematic seriousness and fictive artistry.

Not merely does Tilghman take on big themes, but he does so in adroit and unexpected ways. He is not a comic writer, but a dinner encounter with other fading relics of the old aristocracy is comic in nature and execution. His characters both large and small are painted in full; the shrewish Mrs. McCready, to take one, comes fully to life in only a few sentences.

Above all else — and here, we must nod to William Faulkner — he brings the land itself to life, making it as much a presence as any of the people who have chosen to settle upon it. In all respects, Mason's Retreat is exemplary.

Sri Lanka's peace plan faces collapse

Frédéric Bobin in Colombo

MORE THAN four months after a spectacular bomb attack killed around 100 people in the centre of the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo, the scene of the blast is still one of devastation. Damaged buildings stand as a savage reminder of the message the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) sent to the Sri Lankan government and the international community on January 31.

The gist of that message was that the fall of Jaffna, the separatist stronghold on the northernmost tip of Sri Lanka, to government troops in December did not mean that the Tamil issue had been settled.

Colombo now lives in fear of another attack by the Tigers. Grand-looking hotels left over from the colonial era have been deserted by tourists. Police patrols, the sirens of their vans blaring, screech to a halt and feverishly check the identity of Tamil passers-by.

Colombo 7, an upper-crust district where ministers and other VIPs live in tree-lined streets protected by barbed wire and walls of sandbags, is a no-go area to anyone not armed with a pass.

The fall of Jaffna not only triggered fresh fighting in eastern Sri Lanka, where a third of the population is Tamil, but more than that plunged the capital into a state of gloom.

"War for peace" is the slogan now being peddled by President Chandrika Kumaratunga. Her rallying cry used to be peace: in 1994 she was elected with the support of Sinhalese and Tamils who yearned for an end to a civil war that had already left around 50,000 people dead.

But the cross this leftwing pacifist had to bear was war. After a brief truce, the Tigers renewed hostilities and Kumaratunga had to resign herself to taking drastic action. Never, not even under previous conservative governments, had there been such resolute military action against the separatist strongholds.

That pressure has been kept up. At the end of April, government troops attacked parts of the Jaffna peninsula still held by the Tigers and achieved "strategic gains" by taking the port of Kilali. On May 16 they took Vadamarchchi, the last strip of land still in separatist hands.

But Kumaratunga still hopes to bring about peace. Last year she worked out a federal-style plan whereby the constitution would be reformed so as to allow the creation of regions with considerable powers of their own in such matters as land, tax and police.

But as there was no question of holding talks with the Tigers, who could sit down at the negotiating table with the government? When she revealed her plan in August of last year, Kumaratunga hoped to open up a direct line of communication with the moderate Tamil parties.

They initially welcomed her bold move: "What we particularly appreciated was that here was official recognition that the Tamils have well-founded historical grievances which need to be satisfied," says Neelan Tiruchelvam, a member of parliament belonging to the Tamil United Liberation Front (Tulf).

The trouble is that since then Kumaratunga has watered down her plan considerably. So as not to alienate her Sinhalese majority, for whom all forms of federalism are anathema, she changed the original version of the text, giving it a more centralised slant. What is more, in its revised version it grants Buddhism, the religion of the Sinhalese majority, a form of constitutional "primacy".

There can be little doubt that changes of that kind cooled the enthusiasm of moderate Tamils at a time when the community as a whole felt very badly about the fall of Jaffna. "We don't believe in the carrot and stick approach," says Tiruchelvam.

This foot-dragging by moderate Tamils greatly irritated Kumaratunga, by then desperate to find representatives of the community who could enter into talks. To compound her misfortunes, her plan no longer elicits much enthusiasm from the Sinhalese community. The opposition conservative Unified National Party (UNP) is in no hurry to make life easier for its rival. It has remained obstinately silent, refusing to say whether it approves or disapproves of the plan.

Kumaratunga badly needs the UNP's support in parliament, where a qualified majority is needed to make amendments to the constitution. But her recent military successes in the Jaffna peninsula could eventually make it difficult for the conservatives to persist in their wait-and-see strategy.

Hand to mouth . . . A government soldier distributes food in Jaffna to Tamil refugees from the port of Kilali

One of the reasons they have so far remained silent is their awareness of the fact that the Buddhist clergy are hostile to any form of bold decentralisation. And no one can afford to ignore the influence exerted on Sinhalese public opinion by Buddhist monks, who are in favour of taking a hard line against the separatists.

Equally worrying for Kumaratunga is the renewed activity, in the south, of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a radical movement whose ideology is a cocktail of Sinhalese nationalism and Marxist orthodoxy.

Although much weaker than it used to be in its heyday during periods of insurrection in 1971 and 1989, the JVP is doing its best to exploit the general feeling of disenchantment caused by economic stagnation and worries about security arising from Tamil attacks. It has started to campaign against the government's plans to settle the Tamil problem.

According to various sources, its local activists are beginning to build up arms caches again. Another sign of the increasingly fraught climate in Sri Lanka is the fact that politicians in the southern region have received threatening letters from a mysterious group calling itself Le Mapillu ("poisonous snakes" in Sinhalese), urging them not to back Kumaratunga's plan.

It could turn out that, just as the Tamil Tigers seem to be causing fewer problems in the north of the country, the president will find herself having to cope with a new flare-up of Sinhalese activism in the south.

(May 18)

Cases of 'mad deer disease' emerge in US

Jean-Yves Nau

THE INTERNATIONAL concern caused by the crisis over "mad cow disease" has concentrated minds on the whole range of so-called "spongiform" human and animal conditions.

The present epidemic of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) has hit more than 160,000 cattle in Britain and been responsible for a handful of cases in Switzerland, Ireland, Germany and France.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the epidemic hasn't given much heartache to the United States and Argentina, two important beef-producing countries that stand to benefit financially from the BSE outbreak.

To that end, they have been broadcasting the message that their cattle are completely free of the disease and that their beef can be safely imported.

But matters are not quite as simple as that, according to the latest issue of the French weekly, La Semaine Vétérinaire, which reveals some new facts about the situation in North America.

The magazine states that since 1990 41 cases of a disease that is similar to BSE have been recorded in various deer living in the United States and Canada. Much of the data comes from the University of Colorado.

Three species of deer are concerned, the wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*), the mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and the white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*).

The affected animals display symptoms and lesions similar to those observed in sheep, cattle and antelope suffering from spongiform encephalopathy. In 12 cases, an abnormal prion of the kind found in scrapie was identified.

The last recorded case dates from the beginning of this year. The animal was a wapiti living on a small farm in Saskatchewan, Canada. It had been imported from the United States in 1989.

Dr François Moutou of the National Centre of Veterinary and Food Research writes in La Semaine Vétérinaire: "In none of the cases is there any explanation for the origin of the disease. Wild herds may have grazed in the vicinity of flocks of sheep. But that situation also occurs in other parts of the world without there having been cases of the disease in local deer."

In other words there is a real problem of spongiform encephalopathy on the other side of the Atlantic. It is only now that the scale of the epidemic and its possible repercussions on public health are beginning to be realised.

"Between the moment when the first case came to light in the United States and the present time, the consumption of game does not seem to have been banned or regulated," Moutou writes.

"People eat at least 2.5-3 million American deer shot by hunters each year. The possible risks involved are unknown. In the west of North America there are pumas, which also hunt deer. What do they risk?"

(May 19/20)

France again caught up in Algeria's violence

EDITORIAL

ALGERIA is too close and too familiar for France to keep to a strict policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of its former colony. Even if the French government were determined not to get involved, those it has been in contact with in Algeria would do everything in their power to drag it into their domestic affairs.

The seven Trappist monks who were kidnapped by the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) two months ago, and whose "throats have been slit", according to a GIA communiqué of May 23, were intended in the eyes of their captors to act as bargaining chips in some imagined negotiation process with Paris.

France finds itself once again, and with extreme reluctance, caught up in the terrible turmoil of Algeria's civil war — whose violence seems to have no bounds, and which Paris can do little to quell.

Everything would be so much simpler if it were possible — even broadly — to sort out the good guys from the bad and establish the responsibilities of the various parties involved. But the longer the war drags on, the murkier and more puzzling the situation in Algeria becomes.

Who really knows what lurks behind the initials GIA, given that there exists a whole constellation of warring groups and subgroups? Who knows to what extent we are being manipulated?

The French, who have expressed the wish that the democratic process should get under way again in Algeria, have no illusions about the support they have lent Liamine Zeroual, democratically elected as president last November.

They know full well that the real power lies not in his hands but in those of a military nomenclature that is desperately clinging on to its privileges and will stop at nothing to preserve them.

The killing of the monks invalidates President Zeroual's claim to have improved security and initiated a gradual return to normality. As for his talk of setting up a political dialogue with the opposition, he has imposed parameters that are too narrow for his legitimacy to have been bolstered.

Paris has gone so far as to express the wish that Islamists who have eschewed violence should be allowed to take part in the political process again, and it has kept in discreet contact with them.

But after hoping that Zeroual, who won an easy victory in the presidential elections, might turn out to be the architect of the beginning of a reconciliation, the French government feels let down. In view of the May 23 communiqué, it has little choice now but to urge all French nationals still living in Algeria to leave the country.

(May 24)

The grand old man of Italian cinema

Marcello Mastroianni tells **Jean-Michel Frodon** and **Pascal Mérigeau** why he still loves acting



Mastroianni with his daughter Chiara at the Cannes film festival last month

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN SCHULTS

IN RAUL RUIZ'S Trois Vies Et Une Seule Mort, which was shown in competition at the recent Cannes Festival, you play several different characters. Was that what attracted you about the film?

I'm easy when it comes to acting. I didn't want to wear glasses or a false beard to show I was playing different parts. But I did ask Raul Ruiz how he intended to let the audience know which character I was playing at a given moment. "There's no point," he said. "You'll be the same person, just changing according to the environment you happen to be in. That's how you'll come to have three or four lives." It was more fun, and I didn't have to go through the chore of getting made up.

Acting is the only *raison d'être* of my profession. But people don't believe me when I say I don't care about the rest — I never watch the rushes. When the day is over, it's time to go home, or to have dinner with friends. I'm not interested in interviews, television, festivals and all that.

Are you still as interested in acting as you used to be?

I still keep on getting endless offers. My friends say I'm incredibly lucky, and it's true. But I simply tell them that I've always had this lust for life, and that life has responded by being generous to me.

When I was young and saw my mother going to confession, I said: "What can you confess? You work from morning to night, and sometimes you get slapped by my father when times are hard. When could you possibly have time to sin?"

She said it was God's will. I didn't like that: I don't believe in God, I believe in life. But I almost find myself agreeing with her. In my life, I've taken everything as it came. Being a star means getting pampered every day, being loved by everyone, doing the most enjoyable job in the world and, to cap it all, getting well paid. What on earth could there be to complain about? I hate the way certain American film stars talk about the suffering involved in acting. What suffering are they talking about?

But you're forced to turn down parts, aren't you?

Of course. For example, in Ruiz's film there's a scene in which the owner of a house becomes his own butler — a situation which also featured in a project I'd been offered shortly before in Italy. When I mentioned this to Ruiz, he showed me a 19th century novel which already contained the same plot. I turned down the earlier project because I had to play a voyeur. I don't know how to play parts like that.

In 1993 I was in I Don't Want To Talk About It, a film directed by Maria Luisa Bemberg in Argentina. My friends wondered why I was going off to Argentina to play a man who is married to a dwarf. But why not? And what was great was that in the film it's she who leaves me!

I'm in favour of anything that counteracts that bloody awful "Latin lover" stereotype. What "Latin lover", I ask you? To someone like me, who has never seduced a woman, that label is an insult. I've played homosexuals, impotent men, ordinary men, but all that talk of a "Latin lover" is a childish fantasy. I feel I'm being treated like a gigolo.

I like playing parts that represent a challenge, but I can't and won't accept just any kind of part. To play a voyeur, you have to be like that wonderful English actor Anthony Hopkins, who has such magnetic eyes.

Directors and producers are wrong to choose actors just because they are stars. And actors are wrong to accept parts so they can pay for their new swimming pool.

You started very young, didn't you?

At the age of 11 — and in church. There was a little theatre in the crypt of our local church, and the priest wrote plays. I acted at school and at university in Rome, where I read architecture. We ran a little amateur dramatics company there.

I had a spectacular debut as a professional in A Streetcar Named Desire, put on by Luchino Visconti's company. He'd come to see one of our shows because Giulietta Masina, who had belonged to the troupe before the war, had done us the favour of acting with us.

Vittorio Gassman was Kowalski, and I played his friend. I felt very much at ease — I came from a working-class background, like the character I played. When Gassman left a year later I took over his part. It was a great success.

Then came Chekhov, Shakespeare and Goldoni. I spent 10 years with the company. Film parts came gradually, then one day I got my first big role, again with Visconti, in Le Notti Bianche. The following year, in 1958, I organised a company of my own to put on Chekhov's Platonov, which Visconti was going to direct. Then Fellini came along and offered me La Dolce Vita.

Visconti advised me to accept, pointing out that we could put the play on later. But by the following year I was in the cinema's clutches. [Mastroianni appeared in no less than seven films in the following 18 months.]

The making of La Dolce Vita was six months of sheer happiness. Fellini said we should never have stopped shooting the film but turned it instead into one of those pathetic serials that drag on for ever. The making of the film really was *la dolce vita*.

Have you never been attracted by Hollywood?

I never felt the urge to work there until 1992, when I said to myself that I ought to see what it was like. The director of the film concerned, Used People, wasn't American, but an Englishwoman, Beeban Kidron. The cast included Jessica Tandy, Shirley MacLaine and Kathy Bates, all Oscar-winners in their time. We spent three weeks rehearsing, cooped up in a room in New York. Then we had to work 14 hours a day. Fourteen hours!

I was told I would have to work like that if I wanted to earn dollars. It was absurd: we had to obey silly rules, and there were these people who hung around to keep an eye on things, bank and insurance people. Poor Kidron was desperate too — you can't work properly with three cops breathing down your neck.

I remember acting in Mario Monicelli's Le Due Vite Di Mattia Pascal in 1985. We were having lunch in a Tuscan village square, which overlooked a whole valley, when Monicelli yelled: "Up yours, you Hollywood lot! You'll never have the pleasure of lunching in such beautiful and simple surroundings as this."

Do you think the American cinema is too dominant?

I've nothing against the American cinema, though I sometimes get annoyed at the idea of all the money they have and the way they throw it around. There's probably a crisis of ideas in Europe, but there are also economic problems. We must ensure that films get shown in cinemas and that they're not taken off too quickly. Divorce — Italian Style was a worldwide hit, but it did badly to start with. Then more and more people went to see it. These days it would have been taken off after a week's run.

Why should we allow ourselves to be Americanised? I love Naples, the least Americanised city in the world, where the theatre has remained Neapolitan, the food is Neapolitan, and music consists of Neapolitan songs. The people of Naples are wonderful spectators. They get caught up in the action. At the stage entrances of theatres showing a popular Neapolitan form of melodrama known as *sceneggiata*, spectators wait for the baddie to come out so they can insult him and spit in his face. We should all be Neapolitans.

But wasn't Naples occupied by the US army?

Yes but not by the Italians! The biggest danger to Naples since unification has been central government in the north. When it was occupied by the French and the Spanish the city was a Mediterranean capital.

My grandfather took his whole family of 11 from a village near Naples to Turin in 1927. I was three at the time. We formed part of the first wave of immigrants going north. But one's origins don't go away: at home we spoke the same rough Neapolitan dialect we had before. Seven years later, we all upped and moved from Turin to Rome.

Language is an important issue for you, isn't it?

Yes, of course, and especially the diversity of languages. I've acted in films throughout most of Europe, speaking Italian, French, English, Spanish and Portuguese.

In Italy the cinema hasn't lost its various accents . . . Accents give words colour, whereas official Italian — academic Italian — is the language spoken on television. Television standardises language as it does everything else, from food to clothes and many other things as well.

(May 10)

Fleshing out a life in pictures

Balthus
by Claude Roy
Gallimard 272pp 450 francs

IT IS no easy task to write a life of a publicity-shy painter who says: "I don't like talking about my painting, because for me talking about painting means trying to express very badly, in words, what I have said much better in my painting."

As a friend of Balthus, Claude Roy felt confident enough to have a stab at his biography. With the help of some fresh material, he tries to piece together a life that Balthus does his best to obscure — apart from his dealings with his most famous contemporaries.

Through perseverance and a skilful use of indiscretion, Roy manages to establish more or less precisely the facts of Balthazar Klossowski de Rola's childhood (he was a prodigy who amazed Pierre Bonnard and Maurice Denis), his adolescence, the interwar period when he started his career as the painter Balthus (under the influence of André Derain and Surrealism), and, decades later, his more public years when he ran and restored the French Academy in Rome.

These new biographical details are all the more interesting because they are accompanied by illustrations of many paintings previously hidden away in private collections. There remain some shady areas in his life, to which Balthus occasionally alludes without lifting the veil.

Roy finds the going easier when he comes to explain the various elements of Balthus's aesthetic approach, which ranges from the Quattrocento and China to Bruegel and Courbet. "They all share the same conception," Balthus remarks, "the Chinese conception of painting, which sets out not to represent things but to identify them."

Roy does his best to verify the relevance of that statement in the paintings, and succeeds when dealing with the big Morvan and Italian landscapes, the nudes of the sixties, and the drawings.

Balthus' earliest works show other wide-ranging influences, which include watered-down Cubism. Picasso's influence can be sensed in the way that Balthus paints faces as if they were made of stone, emphasising the arch of the eyebrows, the eyelids and the protrusion of the lips.

Other names come to mind, from Douanier Rousseau to Otto Dix during his Neue Sachlichkeit period — all of them, of course, references Balthus would reject.

One wonders if he is any happier to find the word "craftsmanship" applied to him. Roy, echoing Claude Lévi-Strauss, regrets the demise of "craftsmanlike skills inherited from old masters", skills whose essence, Roy claims, Balthus is one of the very few 20th century artists to have preserved.

Roy tends to overdo Balthus's nostalgia for old masters and overpraise his painting skills and fondness for sophisticated composition. In so doing, he pushes into the background the man who painted La Leçon De Guitare and La Toilette De Cathy.

It could be that posterity will prefer this incongruous, licentious and sometimes pornographic Balthus, the contemporary of Georges Bataille and Hans Bellmer, to the virtuoso he later became.

(May 10)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

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LONDON HOTELS & APARTMENTS

In pursuit of the Promised Land

Matthew Engel visits Israel for the first time and finds it divided by conflicts — not least between ancient and modern, as well as war and peace

THE MOMENT a Jew first sets foot in the Promised Land is supposed to be revelatory and unforgettable, even if one happens to arrive after five hours on British Airways rather than an improbable passage through the Red Sea and 40 years in the desert.

This was as true for me as for my forefathers, though the manner of it was not necessarily the same. Before I had even passed Customs at Ben-Gurion airport, something happened that was so totally Israeli that it became a sort of motif for my entire trip.

It happened at the money-changer's, a place that does have a certain biblical resonance. I had spoken to no one, except to say "Shalom" to the immigration officer, but I was in my usual traveller's tizz and when the clerk handed back my passport I wandered off without waiting to be given any shekels. He called me back, smiled patronisingly and passed over the money. At that moment the large Israeli behind me in the queue called out: "You SEE. Honest people."

It is difficult to convey in print the emphatic mixture of defensiveness, aggression, triumphalism and national self-absorption contained in those four words. Indeed, the clerk was honest and I was grateful. But even an obvious noodnik like me was bound to notice a complete absence of local currency sooner rather than later and would have been back to argue. The bank's procedures would have proved me right. Dishonesty was not an option, here or at any other airport in the world. But only in Israel would a third party have tried to make this trivial incident part of a patriotic advertising campaign.

Israel's enemies have often likened it to apartheid South Africa. There are similarities but the comparison is not quite apt. White South Africa used to trawl the world for compliments and a kindly word from a London newspaper, or an obscure MP would be transformed into a big local story. Israeli news often sounds like "Your Slights Tonight". On a quiet day last week the headline event on the radio was one inflammatory pamphlet produced by an obscure group in East Jerusalem. Army spokesmen will call in erring journalists and say: "You are not very fair to us. We are very nice really."

There is, I think, a reason for this difference. Apartheid was wicked and its perpetrators knew it. Zionism is a just cause but it has brought with it much injustice and suffering to other people, suffering that Israel has never recognised, still less understood. Until, perhaps, now. This week Israel goes to the polls in an election that will decide the future of far more than one country. Its 4 million voters will either decide to retain Shimon Peres as prime minister and continue along the boulder-strewn road towards peace in the Middle East, or will elect Benyamin Netanyahu, who has specifically repudiated the idea that alongside Israel there can be a state called Palestine.

Overtly, the choice is not that simple. Peres is, after all, the man who in April ordered the bombing of Lebanon, largely for political reasons. As the combatants grapple for the middle ground, Peres's posters emphasise the word "strong" while Netanyahu's talk of "peace". Spokesmen for his Likud party often say he will merely be a tougher negotiator. "We will get a better peace because he will compromise less," in the words of one candidate, Danny Danon. But peace and Palestine are not alternatives. Either Israelis will recognise that other people have the right to the national redemption they themselves have achieved or the state's second half-century will be much like the first.

Yet already the country is moving into a new phase. Three years after Yitzhak Rabin stood on the White House lawn and shook hands with Yasser Arafat with the air of a man obliged to accept a stinking fish, Israel still feels like a place intrigued by the possibilities of a peace it has actually never known.

It spent 19 years, from 1948 to 1967, struggling even to exist. It got through by the hard work of its pioneers and the courage of its soldiers, very often the same people. It has spent the last 29 years as an imperialist power, securing survival by bullying, sometimes tyrannising, those it conquered. Now at last Israel has the chance to move on.

Most people see the Middle East as a region split between Jew and Arab. But in these parts you cannot get away with anything as simple as that. Every orthodox Jewish household requires at least two sets of crockery: milk and meat. The Israeli electorate can be bisected in an infinite number of ways: left and right; hawk and dove; Ashkenazi (Jews from the North European tradition) and Sephardi (from further south); religious and secular. The religious community itself splits into "modern orthodox" and extremists, who then divide into the followers of the Hasidic and Lithuanian traditions. And, of course, this is to over-simplify horribly.

Political science here is more like geology, the study of the fissures in a huge piece of rock. But it comes down to one major split. The Jewish-Arab confrontation, in the Holy Land's infinite timescale, is the brief aberration of a century or so. The real split here is between old and new.

With a population that is both highly motivated and highly educated, this is probably going to be the most potent of all the Asian business tigers; indeed it may be Israel's forthcoming economic domination of the region that will be the prime cause for conflict in the 21st century.

On the outskirts of Jerusalem there is a junction. One turning points to Jericho and the Dead Sea. The other points to Burger House. And that is one aspect of the choice Israel now has to make. Back to the Bible or straight to the Burger House?

The country's attitude to religion is the biggest shock of all to a Diaspora Jew. Outside Israel a Jew defines himself through various forms of ritual observance. Here, confident in their Jewishness, people can afford to ignore their Judaism. The pioneers were militant secularists by temperament, so Israel has never been in real danger from theocrats. But part of the nation's tradition of hardship — now starting to change — has been the six-day week, so Saturday has had to encompass, for instance, soccer as well as synagogue — a combination that is anathema to the orthodox.

Maybe a sixth of the country count as "ultras" — the black-hat, black-coat, black-beard Jews; maybe another sixth are what they call the "knitted *kipa*" class, who cover their heads and observe *kashruth* and the Sabbath without entirely retreating from the 20th century. Indeed, this group has replaced the kibbutzniks in the forefront of the Israeli armed forces.

The rest of the country fall into various degrees of disdain and contempt. Nearly all will have a family dinner at Passover, just as all Britons will have Christmas Dinner, and most will fast on Yom Kippur, a day whose solemnity was given a modern dimension by the Arab invasion of 1973 — but they will do little else. It is widely held that the ultras are gaining ground, partly because they breed as zealously as they pray, partly because most new Western migrants belong in their camp and partly because Israel's quirky proportional representation voting system has given their mullah-like rabbis inordinate power and suffocated the emergence of a more liberal Judaism.

It is perhaps more accurate to say that the country is becoming more polarised. "In our community," said a civil servant who comes from a family of Moroccan migrants, "it used to be traditional to go to synagogue on Saturday morning, have lunch at home and then go for a drive in the afternoon. Now people tend to be in one camp or the other."

The civil servant in question is Yakov Azuelos, the head of Jewish Enrichment at the education ministry. He is not very observant himself — a splendidly Israeli quirk. He cares passionately that people should be able to make an informed choice: "I want a new Jew who knows his sources. Then it's up to him. The problem now is ignorance." Eighty-eight per cent of Israelis, according to a recent survey, do not know all the Ten Commandments; and two in five cannot name the Five Books of Moses.

The ministry runs a programme in which Jewish and Israeli Arab children get together. These meetings tend to be stilted before the participants discover they are interested in the same things. A private organisation known as "Bridge" has the far harder job of bringing both secular and religious teenagers together. "The secular see the religious as narrow, bigoted, anti-democratic demagogues," says Bridge's director, Danny Tropper. "The religious see the secular as fun-loving, valueless, discotheque dancers. This is one of the tragedies of Israel today. The great irony of the country is that the Jewish tradition, which should have helped unite Israel, is in fact the great factor dividing it."

Changing face . . . a Russian immigrant plays his violin in a street dominated by the McDonald's logo PHOTO: JUDAH PASSOW

Modern indifference may be winning but the determined anti-religion of the kibbutz is in retreat. The pioneer with gun and hoe seems irrelevant to the burger-eating classes. And even the concept of making the desert bloom, which first won Israel global admiration, now seems like a waste of precious water.

Most of the kibbutzim ran into financial trouble in the 1980s. Kibbutz Yizreel, in the Jezreel Valley, came through because, among the almond groves and the cotton fields, it now runs a factory building advanced machines to clean swimming pools. Its central beliefs remain intact; everyone is still paid the same. "With respect," said Yossi Piekarski, one of the managers, when I expressed surprise, "Margaret Thatcher's beliefs have not weathered very well."

But some of the ancillary aspects of kibbutz-socialism have been swept away. Last year Yizreel members finally voted to allow everyone to have private cars; a decade ago they were not even allowed air conditioning, on the grounds that it was unfair for some to have what others could not afford. No longer do children sleep away from families in dormitories. "Does everyone still spend their evenings dancing the hora round the camp fire?" I enquired. "You must be joking," said one kibbutnik. "They all go back home and watch their videos."

For what they are worth — 3 per cent of the votes — the kibbutzniks will still choose, near-unanimously, Shimon Peres. But three hours' drive from them, and just an hour plus roadblocks from the nightclubs of the new Jerusalem, is Hebron, the last major town on the West Bank (Jerusalem excepted), where the forces of Arafat's incipient statelet have yet to take charge.

Here are perhaps the most exposed of all the Israeli settlers on the West Bank, a few dozen families who have re-colonised a town where what they claim was a 3,700-year-old Jewish tradition, dating back to Abraham, was ended in 1929 when the Arabs massacred the Jewish community, killing 66 people.

It was Sunday morning and blazingly hot. From down the hill, the bedlam-noise of an Arab market day wafted fitfully. Most of the settlers had gone to work but a few Israeli servicemen stood on guard, their boredom contending with the ever-present fear of some further terrorist lunacy; their hunger, as they grumbled about the absence of lunch, at that moment surpassing everything.

SUDDENLY A siren started, and came closer. An armoured car appeared and behind it a coach. Inside was a group from the Tel Aviv suburb of Ra'anana. Religious zealots themselves, they come to Hebron every New Moon to express their solidarity with the settlers. Among them was Shlomo Slonim, who as a baby survived the 1929 slaughter when his family were killed. "This was the house of my parents and my grandparents," he said. "I was the fifth generation born in Hebron."

There was really no need to ask: these were Netanyahu voters. But I felt obliged to try. Did he think this should be Israel or Palestine? Mr Slonim was too staggered by the question to reply. From behind me a woman with an American accent almost spat: "There is no such thing as Palestine."

Philip Roth wrote that Zionism sprang not only from the urge to escape persecution but came "out of a highly conscious desire to be divested of everything that had come to seem . . . distinctively Jewish behaviour — to reverse the very form of Jewish existence. The construction of a counterlife that is one's own anti-myth was at its very core."

A few days ago an Israeli was telling me about a friend of his, an accountant or something, and an army reservist who, as part of his annual stint, found himself in Gaza at three in the morning, hauling terrorist suspects out of bed at gunpoint. "You know," he told his friend, "I'm beginning to think this isn't really a job for a nice Jewish boy." Maybe the time has come to counter the counterlife — if, as the man at the airport said, the Israelis are truly honest people.

The new coolies

In Hong Kong they're branded Filth and Eurotrash for their bar-crawls and odd brawls. **Andrew Higgins** meets the expats at the fag-end of the British empire

GRANVILLE SHARP, respected businessman, hospital benefactor and crude racist, fumed in 1896 at imperialism gone soft: "When I first came to Hong Kong every Chinese coolie doffed his cap and stood on one side to allow you to pass. When do you see a coolie do that now? We do not exercise our undoubted superiority."

A century on, with less than 400 days left in the life of a colony once suffused with stupefying snobbery, Hong Kong still has its coolies and still mutters about their insolence. But today they have names like Chris, Jacko and Mick, wear hard-hats — removed for fights but never in deference — and speak in the exotic dialects of London, Glasgow and Manchester.

Branded "Eurotrash" for their bar-crawls and the occasional beer-soaked brawl, they are the new coolies at the fag-end of the British empire, a final wave of fortune-hunters and thrill-seekers washed up on the China coast.

"We get a bit out of order sometimes. We get tanked up and bugger about. Maybe we scare the Chinese," says Jacko, a labourer from south London. "We come in peace but like to get a bit lairy occasionally." Like hundreds of others, he came to Hong Kong to work on the colony's new airport, a construction project so gargantuan it involves more cranes than exist in all of London.

Across Asia, the rigid racial hierarchy once imposed by colonial power has been turned upside down by the region's economic boom. Europeans, Australians and Americans are now taking, not giving orders. But nowhere has the balance of power — the "undoubted superiority" trumpeted by Mr Sharp in 1896 — shifted quite so sharply as in what, for another year at least, remains the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong.

"Chinese businessmen love to be served by someone British. They've worked in offices managed by some bastard from Britain or America. They've been treated like second class citizens. Now they can have us working for them," says Mick from Glasgow, sometime waiter, one time welder, sacked sewage plant worker and voracious consumer of hashish. Fired again last month for mouthing off at his Chinese boss, he now hopes to pay for his bunk-bed, beer and "puff" by working as an extra in a Chinese film. He has never acted before but is more concerned by his need for a suit to wear on the set. "Christ! I've never owned a suit in my life."

While colonial civil servants and crustier veterans of the old business élite might mutter about pulling out as British power recedes ahead of the July 1997 handover, other Britons are pouring in. Swollen by arrivals in the first three months of this year, the British population in Hong Kong now numbers some 37,000.

Wen Wei Po, a fiercely anti-colonial newspaper controlled by Beijing, complains of British riff-raff "swarming in like bees". Window, a weekly magazine set up to cheer the demise of British rule, has decorated its cover with a drawing of a drug-crazed tramp in a bowler hat. It warned: "Beware of the Brits."

Local politicians, who usually focus their anti-immigration fervour on hapless Vietnamese asylum-seekers locked up in detention camps, now also target economic refugees from Britain. Speaking in Hong Kong's Legislative Council recently, Selina Chow demanded an end to unrestricted visa-free access for Britons.

"Next year they all get handed back to China so everyone wants to stand up and slag off the Eurotrash," complains Chris, another airport labourer who came out to Hong Kong after working as a tree surgeon in Guildford and as a builder in Berlin. "Since I came out, I can understand how the blacks and Pakis feel back home. You work 11 hours, the rain coming down, the sun coming down, every damned thing coming down — so of course some people get a bit stroppy when they knock off at night."

He has a stud in his nose, earrings and a studded leather dog collar around his ankle. Each of his arms has a tattoo of a busty woman. In Singapore, he would never make it out of the airport. Until midnight on June 30 next year, however, his British passport guarantees entry into Hong Kong. The influx of Britons is blamed for a rash of street fights, a surge in drugs and petty theft, and assorted other ills in need of an easy scapegoat.

Status-obsessed Hong Kong can tolerate rowdy Britons in suits with mobile phones, but not unruly labourers in grubby T-shirts. A black worker from Cornwall got his name and picture plastered across the local press when he staggered from a nightclub on LSD, smashed a taxi windscreen and then jumped in a fountain in Statue Square under the gaze of a solemn Victorian banker cast in bronze.

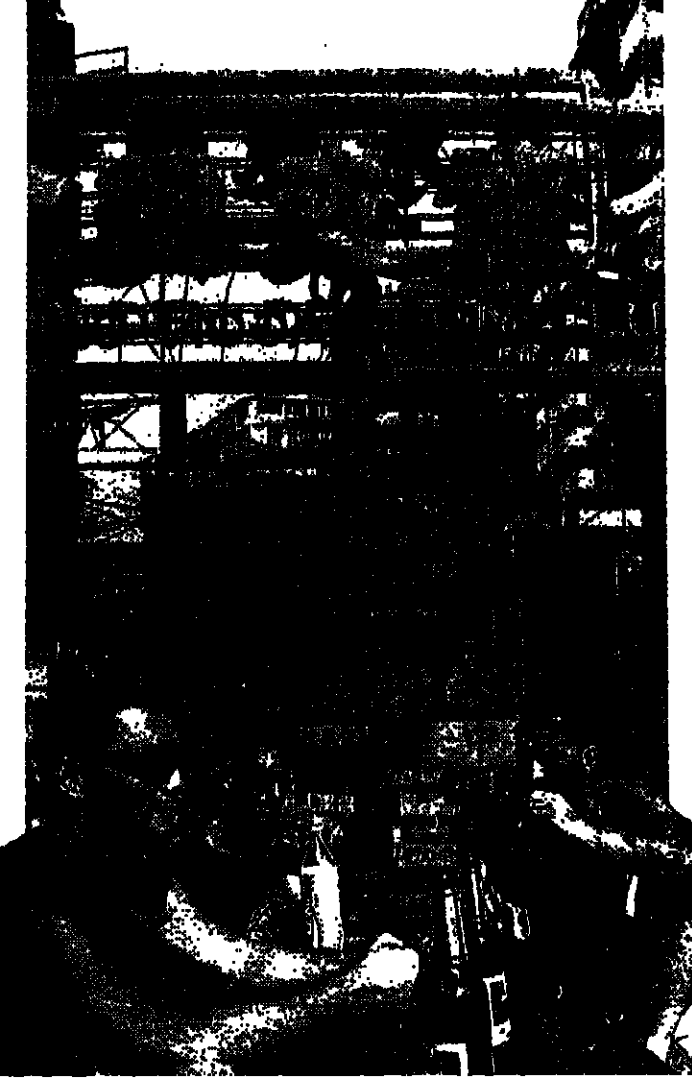
On Lantau island, the site of the new airport, labourers are moving in *en masse*, creating their own little colonies in what was the most isolated, undeveloped and most Chinese part of Hong Kong. "There is resentment between us and them," Jacko says, his eyes hidden behind sunglasses. "This was their place before we came along and took it over."

The Lantau Café recently expanded its menu beyond Cantonese cuisine to meet the tastes of its new *gweilo* (ghost person) clientele. It now serves fish and chips, pie and chips, chicken and chips, hot dogs and all-day breakfast.

"The Chinese used to think that all gweilos were rich and wore suits and carried briefcases," says Paul Docherty, manager of the airport workers' Lantau regular, Papa Doc's pub. "Instead of seeing suits, they see all these gweilos going around in muddy boots and tattoos. It has confused them."

Even at the apogee of empire, Hong Kong attracted more than its share of main-chancers and ambitious dropouts from Britain. It was, after all, the only colony founded by drug dealers. Then came the lawyers, stock brokers and other professionals. They peddled wares less noxious than opium but could never quite escape the stigma of having come to Hong Kong to escape more than merely British taxes.

In polite society, they were known as "expats" and excited resentment among local Chinese because of lavish allowances and often modest skills. Hanging over every cocktail party, was another name: Filth, an acronym for Failed in London, Try Hong Kong. Such digs, however, did not alter the fact that foreigners, particularly Britons, were still top dogs. They had not only expense accounts but, so long as a British governor reigned supreme in Government House, they also had power.



Bad company . . . The influx of Britons to Hong Kong is blamed for a surge in petty crime MONTAGE PHOTOS: GARRY WEASER; CHRISTIAN JUNGBLUDT

"*THE* Chinese might not have liked you but before you got respect as a foreigner," grumbles Richard, who spent 16 years in Hong Kong working for the "princely hong", the colonial era trading firm Jardine Matheson. "Now you are just a gweilo." In 1986, he left Jardine and went home to Derby to set up his own company. A decade later, after an expensive divorce and bankruptcy, he has moved back, though not to the well-heeled expat enclave towards The Peak where he used to live. "I starved myself for seven months on social security just to get the money for the air fare out here."

He married, at the age of 44, a former beauty queen — he shows off pictures of her wearing a "Miss Charity" sash — and now lives in a filthy hostel, in an area bursting with fake Rolex watches and bogus designer clothes, on Kowloon peninsula. "UK is the pits," he says over far too many pints in an underground budget bar.

Money is the main motive driving the new British invasion. Chris, the tattooed airport worker, says he can save up to £1,000 a month thanks to low taxes and cheap rent on Lantau. "You can't live on what they pay you in England. I thought they were taking the piss when they told me my last salary back home." For most, though, money is for spending not saving. But if hanging on to money is hard, hanging on to the same job is often harder still. John, from Milton Keynes, has had 13 different jobs since he arrived last year. They range from bartending at Rick's Café to work on the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme No 1.

The worst, though, was a stint scraping muck from under a pier: "Stuck down a pit all day covered in shit. At first I couldn't stand being told by Chinese what to do. But I got sacked from so many jobs I learnt to put up with it . . . The only way to keep a job here is to take it really seriously."

Laid up with flu in his hostel, he drinks Lemsip in between drags on a communal joint. A friend wears a big badge with "Beat Drugs" printed in English and Chinese. "I need money, so I put up with it. I don't care any more how much grief they give me; I'll put up with it. We'd act the same way if the shoe was on the other foot."

Mark, a hard-drinking Mancunian and habitué of the mostly Chinese Whale Pub ("the cheapest beer in Hong Kong"), left Britain after being sacked on his birthday last year. A graduate in engineering, he says most of his friends from college back home are unemployed.

"In England everyone is always talking about how wonderful everything was decades ago: how we ran the world, how people should respect us; God bless the Queen and all that crap. In Asia they are always talking about the future. In Britain it is always the past: we should have done this, we should have done that, if only she hadn't been elected. Here, all they care about is tomorrow. That is a really cool attitude." China, he predicts, "will be giving aid to Britain before I die".

Few show any desire to return. Jacko muses on what it would take to get him to go back: "If John Major gives us a tropical climate and a beach down the street we'll all move back to England."

Retirement eludes elderly in Ukraine

Matthew Brzezinski in Kiev

WHEN Nina Ivanovna opened her post in April she did a double take. Rises in the cost of the rent and bills for her one-bedroom flat left her with a disposable monthly income of $1.50.

So at the age of 73 — like many other pensioners hit by Ukraine's economic hardships — she has come out of retirement to make ends meet. The country's oldies are going back to work.

Mrs Ivanovna, a widow, former book-keeper and wartime survivor of a Nazi labour camp, is no stranger to hardship, but is bitter nonetheless. "I spent 35 years working for the communist state and now the new system has completely abandoned me," she said.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has not helped elderly people here. With their life savings wiped out by hyperinflation and state coffers ravaged by a lasting economic crisis, Ukraine's estimated 15 million pensioners have been left to fend for themselves.

Many retired people are hustling for a living on the streets of Kiev. At the smart Passage shopping district, one *babushka* has teamed up with her 17-year-old grandson, Ihor, to wash the BMWs and Land Rovers of the new rich. "I was a little surprised when she suggested she join me," said Ihor. "I'm really glad though, because she's attracting a lot of clients." The gimmick appears to be paying off for the pair, who pocket about $15, for their day's efforts.

A daily take of that magnitude matches the average monthly pension here, according to the state pension fund. Even so, $15 does not go far in Kiev. It's enough to buy two pints of Guinness at the Karambul Pub near Passage or 3kg of tomatoes at the Bessarabskiy farmers' market.

A recent United Nations report shows that real income for pensioners has fallen fourfold since Ukraine broke from Moscow in 1991. During that period, consumer prices have soared 119,000 times, says the study. One consequence is that life expectancy has dropped by six years.

"If there's been one group whose standard of living has suffered here, it's the pensioners," said Boris Najman, a French economist and adviser to the government. "It's a vicious circle. As the official economy shrinks, the government imposes higher employer retirement contributions. This serves only to drive more businesses into the underground economy. So in the end there is less and less money coming in for pensions."

Mr Najman estimates that more than half of the country's pensioners take part in some sort of economic activity to survive. Many sell furniture or family heirlooms. Others cook and sell *pirozki*, a local dumpling.

But one group of pensioners least affected by the cuts is collective farmers, who have access to food. Peasant traditions run deep in this agrarian society, and farmers have always worked long after official retirement. Tatania Demyenchuck, aged 67, travels 100 miles from her collective farm to Kiev twice a week to sell meat. "I'll never retire," she said. "I wouldn't know how."



Ties that bind

Experimental treatment for child leukaemia is utilising blood from the umbilical cord, writes **Erlend Clouston**

A *FOUR-YEAR-OLD* boy with leukaemia became the first child in Britain to undergo an experimental treatment which offers new hope to sufferers, it was announced last week. The boy was treated in April. Two weeks later, a seven-year-old child with a rare form of anaemia was given the same treatment in another hospital.

The four-year-old Asian boy, identified only as Bilal, received a transfusion of blood taken from the umbilical cord of his new-born brother. Such blood is rich in stem cells, from which other blood cells form.

Doctors at Glasgow's royal hospital for sick children must now wait up to a year to see whether Bilal improves after the treatment. He has been discharged from hospital.

Leukaemia, a form of cancer of the blood, is usually treated by chemotherapy, with or without transplants of bone marrow, where blood is produced. However, doctors believe that transfusion of umbilical cord blood may be more effective.

The second transplant took place at London's Great Ormond Street children's hospital on Vijay Negi, from north London.

He received blood cord cells taken from his baby sister shortly after her birth. Vijay suffers from Fanconi anaemia — said to be an "extremely rare" condition with no cure other than stem cell transplantation. Doctors say he is making a "very good recovery".

There has been growing interest in harnessing the potential of the umbilical cord. Around 200 transplants have been completed abroad, but until April all British attempts had failed.

The procedure raises the ethical issue of "designer conception". Bilal's mother was already pregnant before the possibility of recycling her cord blood was raised, but his doctor said desperate parents might feel driven to conceive in order to save a child.

"It is not something I would encourage; children should be conceived and born for themselves," said consultant haematologist Brenda Gibson.

The hospital had failed to find a suitable bone marrow donor for Bilal, who had had leukaemia from birth. At present, suitable donors can only be found for about three out of 10 patients, some of whom die while on the waiting list.

Bilal, aged four, with his younger brother Aadil, whose donation of umbilical cord blood may help him to fight leukaemia. The procedure raises the ethical issue of "designer conception" PHOTO: MURDO MacLEOD

Letter from Mauritania Philippa King

Awaiting the next instalment

IT NEVER fails to startle any foreign friends who come to visit me. We pick our way down a sandy street full of rubbish, duck into a tin-roofed house, and invite ourselves into a bare living room where the goats are trying to chew the cardboard off the walls and the family are watching satellite television broadcast from Dubai, Egypt, London or France.

The fact that the house doesn't have water or electricity is no obstacle to the faithful; a cable trails over the wall to next door. What you watch depends upon where you live — those in the vicinity of the Egyptian restaurant, the Moroccan consulate or the French cultural centre pick up those national channels from their neighbour's satellite dishes, but what everyone wants is a rich man living nearby who tunes in to MBC, the Arabic channel broadcast from London. Why? Because Mauritanians are united in their devotion to South American soap operas, dubbed into Arabic and shown every afternoon on MBC. I used to think the streets were deserted after lunch because it was time for a siesta, or for prayers, but now I know better.

I was invited for lunch last week by the family I used to live with, and after a particularly good plate of rice and fish the television was brought into the lounge so we could all watch the latest drama together. Twelve people, from grandmother down to the baby in his mother's arms arranged themselves on the carpet in front of the black-and-white portable and shushed impatiently when the baby interrupted with a whimper.

Visitors took their places with quiet reverence. I was confused; one series ends and another starts without me noticing much change of characters or plot, particularly as they draw from the same pool of young, pretty actresses with long hair. Mañuela becomes Daniella becomes Isabella. There are always a few hard, older, women with set coiffures, a couple of suave but helpless men, and a luxurious mansion in which all the action takes place.

If I'm confused, I don't know what old Aicha, the grandmother, makes of it. When the television first appeared it took her some time to get used to it. A character knocking on a door would make her start up and yell "come in". She asked about women on the screen: "Is she married? Has she got any children?" And she was convinced some cuddly, animated animal characters who sang songs on Egyptian breakfast TV were demons, and kept up a stream of loud prayers for protection until it was switched off.

On the other hand, the biggest addict I know is a black Mauritanian woman, who lives in a small, dark room with her husband, five children and an enormous TV set. Or did: the television was being looked after for a friend of her husband, who reclaimed it the other day. The room looked better, but she was lying on a mattress in a state of depression, letting the latest baby rummage among the folds of her robe for a breast. "I'm ill. All my skin hurts. Life is so hard for a woman who has to stay in the house all day without watching the serials."

She has a point. I've seen her after a long morning preparing lunch for the household of around 25 people, transfixed by Mañuela in her mansion and oblivious to the heat and the smell, the mess left by the children's games, the afternoon's problems to come.

It's pure escapism. Pretty much like me at the weekend, when I often shut the door on Mauritania and get my fix of English TV or films on video — even better if they've been recorded from the television with the advertisements included.

A Country Diary

Richard Mabey

CHILTERNS: The unrelenting cold winds — as bleak from the south as they are from the north — seem to be driving spring back into winter. On high ground the cherry blossom appeared, snuggled deep amongst the foliage. Bunches of embryonic oak leaves litter the ground. And bluebells — six weeks late in many places — are being so smothered by shoals of more cold-tolerant goosegrass that the flowers have the look of some submerged blue seaweed. But most species seem to be coping well.

The local red kites are oblivious to the wind. They toy with it, threading their way between chimney pots and tall beeches with their forked tails doing furious rudder-work. In one of the woods there was a plant I couldn't recognise. It was a dead-nettle of some sort, with flaccid stems over a foot tall, and buds still tight shut. I thought I'd discovered some rare hemp-nettle — until it dawned on me that the prodigy was simply a yellow archangel whose leafy growth had far outstripped that of its benumbed flowers.

But the most heartening adaptation was on the way home. In a spell of sunshine I spotted a group of house martins hawking for insects in the lea of a wooded, south-facing hill. There seemed to be about a score of them, but when I looked through binoculars I could see that there were uncountable hundreds, in a loose, boiling mass that stretched away into the distance. We project our own seasonal depression too easily on to the natural world. If house martins can cope with spring in the freezer, anything is possible.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***WHY IS* Saint George the patron saint of England? And why is he the patron saint of Catalonia?**

IN HIS Oxford Dictionary Of Saints, David Hugh Farmer explains that St George was adopted as patron saint in the Middle Ages by England and Catalonia, as well as by Venice, Genoa and Portugal, because he was the personification of the ideals of Christian chivalry.

St George had been known in England since the 7th-8th centuries but his cult gained new impetus in England during the Crusades. A vision of George and Demetrius at the siege of Antioch preceded the defeat of the Saracens and the fall of the town on the first Crusade. Richard I placed himself and his army under George's protection, and St George was subsequently regarded as the special patron of soldiers. Edward III founded the Order of the Garter under St George's patronage in 1348. In 1415 — after the battle of Agincourt, when Henry V invoked George as England's patron — St George's feast was raised in rank to one of the principal feasts of the year.

St George remained popular in the post-medieval period, but as there is considerable doubt about the historical veracity of his legend, his cult was reduced to a local one in the reform of the Roman calendar in 1969. — *Katherine Lewis, York*

BY THE time George took over from Edward the Confessor as patron of England — at the founding of the Order of the Garter — he had already been guarding Doncaster for over 400 years. In the east he was generally held to protect the armies of Byzantium, and is claimed as national saint by both Georgia and Ethiopia. In Germany he is one of the "14 Saints" who are considered particularly receptive to prayers for help — and in this century was to become the favourite national image of Nazi propaganda.

George's attraction was originally as a martyr in the persecution of 303AD. Tradition elaborated his death into a highly imaginative and varied list of tortures, offering church artists a complete iconographic programme — as at St Neots in Cornwall. At the time of the crusades he also begins to be shown as a mounted dragon-slayer — a depiction probably borrowed from late Egyptian carvings of the god Horus. — *Tom Hennell, Manchester*

***HOW* should we define working class, middle class and upper class?**

PAID by the week, rent your house — working class. Paid by the month, own your own house — middle class. Don't have to work, inherited your house, plus estate — upper class. — *Eric Robbie, Stroud, Gloucestershire*

Any answers?

IS THERE* any reason why so many African leaders (Mobutu, Mandela, Museveni, Moi, Mugabe, Meles, Muluzi, Mswati) have names beginning with M? — *Chen Singban, Witham, Essex

I AM* receiving increasing numbers of shocks from static electricity in shopping centres, at work, from my car and my cat. Can I expect any detrimental effect on my health? — *Jackie Taylor, Rossendale, Lancs

SUPERMARKETS* sell own brand products which are manufactured by well-known companies who remain anonymous, and who sell the same product under their own name at a higher price. How can I find out their identities? — *Pete Snaden, Bristol

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ.

More man, less myth

Deyan Sudjic on Glasgow's homage to the genius of a favourite son, architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh

GLASGOW'S £1.2 million Charles Rennie Mackintosh blockbuster show came within hours of being abandoned last month. The sulphurous and embarrassing row boiled down fundamentally to who should have the final say on the exhibition captions: curator Pamela Robertson from Glasgow University, or Julian Spalding, director of Glasgow's Museum, who is still reeling from the critical savaging of his Gallery of Modern Art.

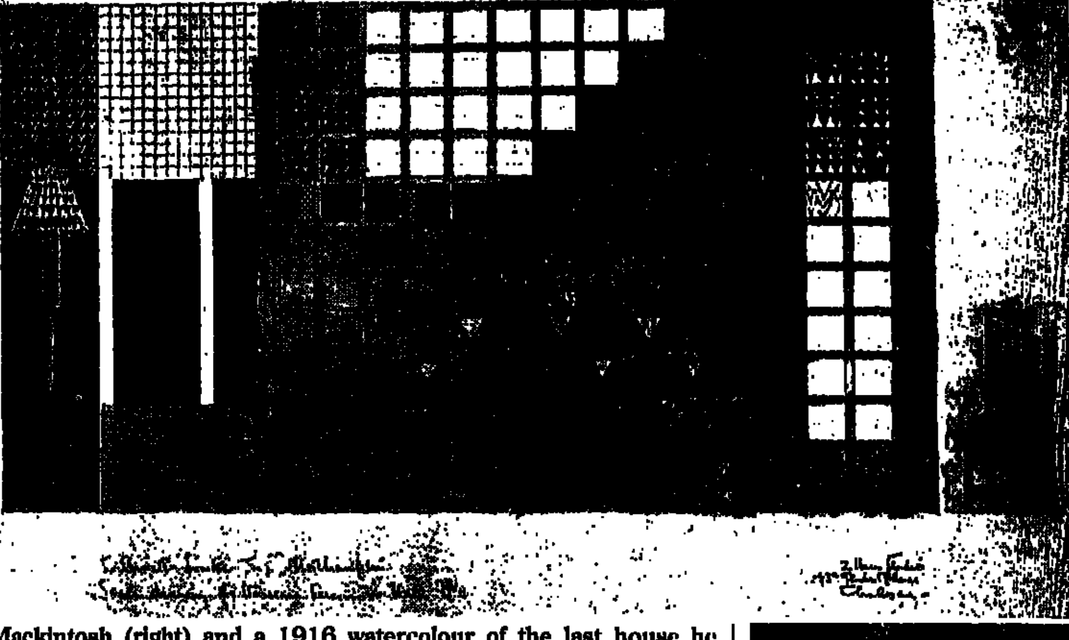
But it provoked a couple of weeks of bitter warfare between the short-and-pithy popularising tendency and the accuracy-above-concision academics. The academics eventually won but only after the University of Glasgow gave an ultimatum: it threatened to pull out on 24 hours' notice all its exhibits from the show at the McLellan Galleries, which is already scheduled to move to the Met in New York, and to Chicago and Los Angeles in the autumn.

The acrimony partly reflects the importance his native city attaches to the reputation of Britain's most brilliant architect this century. He is an economic asset and cultural talisman, a tourist attraction and international draw, able to fill hotel beds and provide a reminder of better times in the city's history. He is the personification of a remarkable moment when Glasgow led international architectural culture.

In bowdlerised form, Mackintosh's spare graphic furniture can now be seen in every ambitious Glaswegian hairdresser's salon, and the alphabet he designed is inescapable, reproduced everywhere in the city. Even the criminal classes have wised up to his value — there was a break-in at the Art School, Mackintosh's masterpiece, in February.

This building is his most moving design, distinguished as much for the astonishing spatial qualities of its library as its famous façade. Importantly, the art school is still used the way he meant it to be. Its corridors, flooded with sunshine and filled with the intoxicating scent of oil paint, look out over the city far below. The furniture, book-shelves and big sinks are all as he left them. Paradoxically, his enormous reputation, reflected in the prices commanded by original pieces of his furniture, is now a bigger threat to the survival of the school's original character than is neglect. Six authentic Mackintosh chairs were stolen from the director's office but were recovered within days.

This exhibition will be most significant if it escapes from the current use of the Mackintosh style as a kind of logo for the city (one with diminishing impact) and manages to refocus attention on Mackintosh's actual lifetime achievements. It takes us from his earliest realised project, the Glasgow Herald building which was designed when he was just 25 to his last, a house built in Northamptonshire in 1917.



Mackintosh (right) and a 1916 watercolour of the last house he designed, in Northampton PHOTOS: HUNTERIAN ART GALLERY/GLASGOW MUSEUMS

There are water-colours and drawings, notebooks, cutlery, furniture and textiles, as well as handsome models of the major buildings and a stunning recreation of the White Ladies Luncheon Room from Miss Cranston's Ingram Street Tea Rooms, designed in 1900, and stored in packing cases since its rescue from destruction 25 years ago (it has been restored by Glasgow Museums). This is the perfect example of a daring commission from an intelligent local patron who actively encouraged Mackintosh; a commission which allowed him enormous freedom to create a much-used public space down to the smallest detail.

So much for the myth that has grown up over the years of Mackintosh as a troubled genius and misunderstood outsider, who was unappreciated by his contemporaries. This myth was the basis of the captioning row, and like most myths it goes through periodic debunking, and then turns out to have had more truth in it than the revisionists care to admit. Though he wasn't actually run out of town, Mackintosh did leave the city that made his extraordinary creative outburst possible, and was never able to recapture his early success.

But the most remarkable fact, usually left out of the romantic exile myth, is that his best work was done when he was working as a partner in a substantial middle-of-the-road Glaswegian commercial practice, Honeyman and Kepple, which fully recognised his talent. It is a combination that would be inconceivable now. That is a measure of just how much architecture has changed in the last century — and not just in Glasgow.

Flawless execution

OPERA
Andrew Clements

IT IS 30 years since anything by Handel has been seen at Glyndebourne — a long, inexplicable neglect for an opera house which has always been ideally scaled to his stage works. But the new production of Theodora, which opened the season there last month, conducted by William Christie and directed by Peter Sellars, makes total, triumphant amends.

Theodora is not an opera at all, but a dramatic oratorio, composed in London in 1749 to an English text by Thomas Morell. The decision to stage that, rather than any of the "real" Handel operas, was surely influenced by Sellars; it's a work he has been aching to direct for more than a decade, for its subject matter returns to one of his constant preoccupations, that of a society's persecution of a minority for their beliefs.

The story is set in Antioch in the time of the emperor Diocletian. Valens, the Roman "president", compels the Christians to worship Roman gods. The noble-born Theodora refuses and, declaring herself unafraid of death, is forced to become a prostitute. She escapes her prison by changing clothes with the young Roman soldier Didymus, but when he is condemned to death she gives herself up and they are executed together, each rapturously willing to die for the other.

Sellars, of course, fastens upon the story's modern resonances, but unlike Hindemith's Mathis Der Maler, which he directed at Covent Garden last autumn, the dramatic power of Theodora is never undermined by too much theatrical detail. There is nothing extraneous here, but a lucid presentation of a deeply moving story.

The arresting set by George Tsypin, lit by James Ingalls, is a plain white box in which sit six giant glass flasks, moved into different constellations for each scene. The vaguely antique look of the cracked glass connects the classical past of the story with the contemporary present of the production: the cast wears 1990s clothes — sweatshirts and sneakers for the chorus, a lounge suit for the president and riot gear for his militia; the executions are medical experiments, unfolded with almost unbearable deliberation and complete with hi-tech cardiographs and intravenous drips.

Meanwhile the music, for the most part slow moving and gravely beautiful, is better presented than one could have dared to hope. Christie and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment allow it to unfold at its own pace, and all the soloists and the Glyndebourne chorus respond superbly. As Theodora, Dawn Upshaw is vulnerable and touching, effortlessly flexible in her delivery despite the occasional American twang. But the finest performances of all come from David Daniels as Didymus, a countertenor of astonishing evenness and purity of tone, and from Lorraine Hunt as Irene, who as the friend of Theodora provides the oratorio with its spiritual bedrock in a series of arias of all-encompassing compassion. It is great Handel singing, but then musically and dramatically this production is flawless.

Brain dead and worse

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

PRECEDED by many signs and portents — a clutching of the forehead, a dreaminess about the old days — Arfer Fowler has died on his allotment from a cerebral haemorrhage. Everyone in EastEnders (BBC1) was astonished. It was the first indication that Arfer had a brain.

Before collapsing among King Edwards, Arfer wandered around the deserted Albert Square; it was a last stroll round a limited life and not unmoving. Everyone had gone to Ben's christening, leaving the Square swept clean of people and sluiced with unaccustomed peace.

You will be amazed to hear that Arfer, whose life seemed so circumscribed, once trod the boards. In Bob Monkhouse's autobiography (chosen by Pauline Quirke as the book to take to a desert island with the Bible and Shakespeare) he says that 25 years ago he appeared with Arfer and Del Boy at Weston-super-Mare in She's Done It Again!, a rib-tickler about a vicar whose wife has sextuplets. I must say I'm sorry I missed that.

There are not a lot of laughs in EastEnders. How often must Arfer, escaping from the crushing woes of the Square to his allotment, have leaned on his spade and heard, like the crash of a distant wave, the laughter at Weston-super-Mare as his trousers fell down.

We are going to have to do something about that fish. Every nation that wins the **Eurovision Song Contest** (BBC1) seizes this unrepeatable opportunity to pump up their tourist trade. If the unrepeatable opportunity turns out to be more like an attack of hiccups, they do run out of exciting things to see and do. For three consecutive years Ireland showed us a large selection of Irish fish. Notably a salmon, fondly recognised as Big Eileen, doing what salmon do best. Jumping about a bit, you know.

It was bad luck that this year's host country, Norway, was also abnormally rich in fish, including salmon.

And next year it's back to Dublin and Big Eileen.

Ireland's winning entry was a mystical ditty —

I am The Voice
In the wind and the pouring rain
I am The Voice
Of your hunger and pain

— that went through you like a wire through cheese.

Which reminds me that, according to the BBC, who cannot tell a lie, Norway invented the cheese slicer, the string vest and the paper clip. You have to do something on those long Nordic nights.

Britain's entry —

Ooh Aah
Just a little bit
Woboooo

— came seventh. Look, I don't want to talk about it.

Norway's presenters, Morten and Ingvild, were a perky pair. Morten kicked off with a song:

The road is wide
But your eyes are red.
Just let it go, babe.

This is a true Eurosong, as it gives you a strong sensation that you've misheard a word somewhere. Belgium's song, for instance, went "Love is a game of jokers and pokers". Can this possibly be right or just rude?

Queen Sonja of Norway, plucky little woman, turned up. King Harald remembered an urgent prior engagement. This shows a sad decline from the fearless old Viking spirit of Ragnarr Hairybreeks and Thorfinn the Skull-splitter. They knew how to write a winning song in those days. Elrike Bloodaxe was so pleased with this song —

King reddened sword
Came ravens a horde
Bright blood outpoured
As shafts flew abroad

— that he let Egil, the songwriter, live. In those days that was considered a good result. If they didn't like your song, they split you to the weasand.

This year Norway came second. Personally, I think they should have entered the elderly woman in the frilly skirt and warm underwear who, in the compulsory cultural bit, stood on a snowy mountain top and sang "Diddley dee do, diddley oh day do".

This was the most dazzlingly packaged Eurovision Song Contest ever. If you ever need a pair of old socks spectacularly gift wrapped, look no further.

Norway's bobby dazzler is said to have cost £4,5 million, and I should think that's conservative. You can see why Radio Telefis Eireann is sucking its teeth thoughtfully.

The big finish was a spirited dash into virtual reality. Computer generated mirages like that glass shower screen on BBC News. At one point a wall seemed to fall on Ingvild. "Missed me!" she said. "Pity," said Wogan, who'd been sitting there a long time without a drink.

A bit of Leigh way

With Mike Leigh receiving a deserved Palme d'Or, **Derek Malcolm** celebrates a great year at Cannes

JUSTICE was served: Mike Leigh, designated Best Director for Naked two years ago, capped his career with the Palme d'Or at the 49th Cannes Film Festival for Secrets And Lies. It was the first time in a decade that Britain has been given the top award (Roland Joffe's The Mission won in 1986). The international jury, headed by Francis Coppola, for once agreed with the International Critics, who also gave Leigh their prize. But that wasn't all for the film. Brenda Blethyn, who plays the mother in this tragicomic drama about family life, also won the Best Actress award.

And the runner-up was a good choice: Lars von Trier's Breaking The Waves, which won the Special Jury Prize, now renamed the Grand Prix du Cannes. The film, shot in Scotland with a largely British cast, headed by a remarkable young actress, Emily Watson, would have been a worthy winner too.

We already knew Von Trier was a brilliant film-maker from his Element Of Crime and Europa, both of which won prizes at Cannes. But this time he also has been disciplined and totally unafraid of telling his relatively simple story in an emotional way. The film is both accessible and subtle. Not perfect, perhaps, but certainly different and reaching into our emotions with what can only be described as amazing grace.

The Minor Jury Prize was handed, incomprehensibly, to David Cronenberg's Crash by a split jury, some of whom, according to Coppola, did not want to be associated with a film that many thought not far from soft pornography. Coppola himself described it as "original, daring and audacious". Otherwise the jury covered themselves with glory, considering the fact that their two predecessors amazingly left out Ken Loach's Land And Freedom last year and Kieślowski's Red the year before. This time there was no such blind spot.

Looking back at the Cannes Festival as a whole, there's little doubt that 1996 proved to be the year when the films took a front seat and show business trailed in some way behind.

Stars were few and far between — though Liz Taylor hosted a big Aids event, and Hugh Grant and Liz Hurley came in to preview extracts from their new film, Extreme Measures, a hospital drama which she produced and in which he stars. For this a boat was moored in the bay on which were so many scantily clad girls that several swimmers almost drowned trying to reach it. It was dubbed "the floating brothel" by the more cynical.

But, all this and the late-night parties apart, there was a strong sense that there were more good films in all sections of the programme than for several years past. "It's disastrous," said one critic of the competition. "There are fewer and fewer films you can walk out of to get a coffee."

Even the last competition entry — Raul Ruiz's Three Lives And Only One Death — was one of the best and most accessible of this merrily intellectual Chilean director's many movies.

Typically, Ruiz says it's an attempt at structural cubism, which sounds difficult but proves great fun as Marcello Mastroianni, playing an old man with multiple personalities, weaves in and out of what in the end proves to be the same story.

There were, of course, disappointments, like Sunchaser, the first Michael Cimino film for six years. This stars Woody Harrelson as a driven and ambitious cancer specialist who is kidnapped by a dying young convict and taken on a trip across America to find a mystical healing lake.

Unfortunately, a clichéd script turns the story into just another over-sentimental road movie.

At least Danny Boyle's Trainspotting, presented out of competition, made its mark. It's been sold all over the world and the Americans are already calling it "Britain's Pulp Fiction".



Double trouble . . . Brenda Blethyn (centre) gives a prize winning performance in Mike Leigh's Secrets And Lies

Even the visiting Virginia Bottomley liked it, saying that anybody who thought it was in favour of the drug culture must be mad. Had it been in competition, it would surely have got a prize.

All the other sections had their successes: Mary Harron's intelligent and striking I Shot Andy Warhol; Terry George's Some Mother's Son, about the hunger strikes of Bobby Sands and others in 1981; Peter Greenaway's clever The Pillow Book; Al Pacino's lively Looking For Richard, described as a meditation on Shakespeare's Richard III; and the beautiful Iranian, Gabbeh, each receiving much praise in the Un Certain Regard section.

Among the highlights of the Directors' Fortnight were John Sayles's powerful Texan racial drama, Lone Star, and the two British entrants — Michael Winterbottom's Jude, an adaptation of the Thomas Hardy novel that's more like Truffaut's Jules Et Jim than a James Ivory film, and Hettie Macdonald's Beautiful Thing, a gay romance set on a council estate, which received a standing ovation.

Above all, there was Sergei Bodrov's Prisoner Of The Caucasus, a dramatic tale of the disastrous Chechen conflict which managed to be both dramatic and very even-handed in approach. This won the International Critics Prize for films outside the competition and well deserved its accolade.

Most of these films will arrive in Britain, probably later rather than sooner, together with Angelica Huston's striking if uneven debut about child abuse, Bastard Out Of Carolina.

Next year the festival celebrates its 50th birthday, which is bound to pull in the stars. Let's just hope that the films in 1997 are as good as those of 1996.

Life and nothing but

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

COLLECTING his Palme d'Or in Cannes, Mike Leigh hoped that his success would help people who wanted to make films about "real life — love and passion and caring and all the things that matter". Let's hope Hollywood doesn't get hold of that recipe — it sounds like the cue for a thousand remakes of Terms Of Endearment.

Leigh, though, is one of the few directors who can convincingly deliver such a formula; and for giving a sense of everyday Britain, in all its rich awfulness and banality, Secrets And Lies is nothing short of miraculous. I say this as someone who hasn't always been convinced by Leigh's films in the past. Either they felt "televisual"; or like Naked they had one or two brilliant performances adrift among an uneven array of understatement and wayward mugging.

Secrets And Lies is the first Leigh film in which all the performances absolutely gel with the world portrayed, from the leads down to a multiplicity of bit parts, sometimes lasting only a few seconds. They walk an extraordinary tight-rope — they're self-evidently *tour de force* performances, and yet you believe in them as real people. The characters in this film are nearly all acting anyway, all trying to keep their world functioning, to cover up its cracks and lacks.

The only person here who's relatively clear-sighted is, appropriately enough, an optometrist — Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), a young black woman who, now that her adoptive parents are dead, sets out to trace her biological mother. To her surprise, she turns out to be white — factory worker Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), a trembling wreck whose life has collapsed in a wash of drink and disappointment. She can't get any joy out of her pugnacious daughter Roxanne (Claire Rushbrook), and sees nothing of her brother Maurice (Timothy Spall), who's slogged his way to success as a photographer. Maurice himself has a chilly relationship with his wife Monica (Phyllis Logan), whose frustrations take refuge in houseproud obsessiveness.

Although Hortense's black family and friends figure briefly, Leigh sticks to the white British discomfort that he knows, and makes Hortense our guide to its mysteries. Her meetings with Cynthia, at first tentative, later quite electric with mutual need, manage to be at once richly comic and quite harrowing.

Brenda Blethyn's Cynthia is a terrifying image of how life can accustom itself to a lack, her hollow, blasted cheer a sort of emotional blitz spirit in the face of lovelessness.

Cynthia may hold the centre of the film, but all the performances are fully fleshed, even the sketchy cameos of the people Maurice photographs. There are three wonderful walk-on parts — Emma Amos as a scarred beauty, Ron Cook as an embittered photographer, and Lesley Manville's harassed social worker, believable down to the last nervy flick of her hair. Everyone knows how intensely contrived the performances are in the Leigh method, but it's a revelation how this ensemble breathes together.

This is also, in an oblique way, the first Mike Leigh film that's partly about film-making. Maurice, after all, is a director of the Leigh school, standing behind the camera and painstakingly coaxing ideal split-second performances — a single smile — out of his subjects. His haggard bluffness may be undemonstrative, but Timothy Spall gives a great performance as a man subsiding under his own weight of unstated emotion and dog-tired of holding everyone else's lives together.

Hilarious and gruelling by turn, Secrets And Lies proves that a film can have a big heart and a harsh edge, and that the British suburban landscape at its most mundane is a fascinating terrain that our cinema has hardly begun to explore. There aren't many people who can do Britain this way; but when Leigh does, it's like a land-mine planted in the heart of sitcom land.

Tight sums that reveal rich beauty

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

THE American choreographer Trisha Brown happily describes herself as a structure freak. Although the surfaces of her dances often have the rich and accidental beauty of a landscape, with rustling moves that look as if breezes are blowing through the dancers, or angular planes as surprising as rock formations, her dance is always pinned to tight mathematical designs. A single phrase will be rigorously repeated, inverted, condensed and embellished as if a computer had been programmed to work out all its possible variations.

And there is usually one single organising idea that motors each piece, an idea that has the resonance of metaphor.

In the 1983 classic Set And Reset (which opens Trisha Brown Company's current programme at the Theatre Royal Brighton) the focus of the dance shifts gradually from one side of the stage to the other. When the seven wheeling, diving, gusting dancers finally exit it's as if we've been watching a weather front blowing across the space.

In the 1994 solo, If You Couldn't See Me, Brown (who at 59 is lean and sphinx-like as a witch) dances entirely with her back to us. It's extraordinary how forcefully a personality can be projected through the curve of a shoulder, the moulding of a spine, the flattened palm of a hand.

Then in her latest piece, MO, Brown creates dance structures to Bach's Musical Offering where complexity is pared down to such simplicity that form becomes loaded with drama. In the first section dance and music create a multi-layered puzzle in which dancers ripple and weave in counterpoint with each other, as well as with the music.

Even the tiniest shifts of an arm can register an independent rhythmic variation. But just as our eye and brain are ready to short circuit on the amount of information we're receiving, lovely moments occur when the dancers and the music all unite in harmonic resolution.

Then, meticulously, the piece is deconstructed into shorter sections of music and dance, disrupted by whole passages of silence and emptiness. Brown shows us things in isolation — a duet for two men whose bodies curve sweetly towards each other even as their feet patter contrasting music. Or a typical Brown prank where she has five dancers trying to cross the stage in a unison line but choreographs all their movements slightly off the beat so that they look like a fidgeting blur.

Progressively, as the work pares down, the dancers' black costumes are replaced by white and grey, as if to let in even more light and air. And finally only one dancer, (Diana Madden) remains. Dressed in white, she dances to the sound of the bare musical phrase which is the seed to all other variations of Bach's score.

At the close she is rejoined by the others, who move together in a frieze of sculpted dance. The climax to which the piece has been moving is to make us see Bach's music and hear Brown's movement with sublime clarity.

Fleet Street men on a mission to explain

Roy Greenslade

Tickle the Public: One Hundred Years of the Popular Press
by Matthew Engel
Gollancz 352pp £20

The Great Outsiders: Northcliffe Rothermere and the Daily Mail
by S J Taylor
Weidenfeld & Nicolson 412pp £20

THE paradox at the heart of Matthew Engel's history is that the first popular press proprietors who set out to use their papers for political propaganda were much less successful at influencing readers than the current crop who see their papers primarily as sources of profit. Readers of the Daily Mail could not be persuaded by Lord Northcliffe to change their bread-eating habits, nor did they follow the advice, years later, of his brother Lord Rothermere, who urged them to support the Blackshirts. Daily Express readers never showed the least enthusiasm for Lord Beaverbrook's daft crusade for Empire Free Trade.

Indeed, according to Sally Taylor's entertaining history, Beaverbrook's failure convinced Rothermere that press owners were eunuchs. He is supposed to have told one of his editors, — "Pon my soul, the amount of nonsense talked about the power of the newspaper proprietor is positively nauseating." The truth was that those papers were preaching sermons which were either inimical to readers' reality (they enjoyed white bread) or way over their heads. The barmy barons could not hope to go against the grain. When they caught the public mood, they were altogether more successful.

Exploiting the British people's deep-seated xenophobia, Northcliffe found wide appeal for his anti-German propaganda, which ran full throttle from 1900 until the outbreak of war. But the first paper that got really close to its readers and their concerns was the Daily Mirror. Its advantage was that it was guided by a succession of men who were not remote from the people in the street. Hugh Cudlipp, editor-in-chief of the Mirror titles for 21 years from 1952, saw his daily paper attain record sales of more than 5.2 million by the end of 1967.

The date is significant. The Daily Mirror helped to undermine the Tory governments of the fifties and early sixties, finding common cause with a working class that was beginning to assert itself through its industrial muscle during an era of full employment. With the Mirror's unabashed support for Labour, the party won elections in 1964 and 1966. By 1968, not only was the political tide beginning to turn as people became disillusioned with Harold Wilson but — and here, Engel's analysis is brilliant — the Mirror was out of touch with the emerging youth culture.

When Rupert Murdoch bought the ailing Sun in 1969, he and his editor Larry Lamb knew just where the Mirror was going wrong. It was the era of permissiveness and new social irreverence, which they appealed to with sex surveys, kiss-and-tell stories and Page Three girls. But it was also a time of widespread industrial unrest. After brief support for Labour, and the 1972 miners strike, the Sun moved towards the Tories.

Once it set its mind to the agenda simultaneously adopted by the new Tory leader, Margaret Thatcher, it set about its task with relish. There can be little doubt of the Sun's political influence in the late seventies and throughout the eighties. After the 1992 election the paper felt so confident it owned up to a truth never previously admitted: "It Was The Sun Wot Won It." It has been denied — by the Sun — ever since. But it is a measure of Engel's success that he has convincingly proved that papers do have an effect, whatever they say.

Image builder . . . Eisenstein pursued the revolutionary ideal through his writings and in films. Ivan The Terrible (above) was one of only seven features he completed during a 23-year career in cinema

Seeing the bigger picture

Ronald Bergan

Eisenstein: Writings 1922-1934
Translated by Richard Taylor
BFI 334pp £16.99

Towards a Theory of Montage
Translated by Michael Glenny
BFI 428pp £16.99

Beyond the Stars: The Memoirs of Sergei Eisenstein
Translated by William Powell
BFI 889pp £45

Eisenstein: Writings 1934-1947
Translated by William Powell
BFI 405pp £35

SERGEI EISENSTEIN is such a colossus in film history that it is astonishing that he was only able to complete seven features during his 23-year career in cinema. Perhaps he would have written less if he had been busier making films, but Eisenstein had an avid impulse to communicate by any means. Professor Richard Taylor, the scrupulous editor of the four volumes of Eisenstein's writings, explains in the introduction to the first book: "His position in the development of cinema as an art form was in many ways similar to that of Shakespeare in the development of modern drama and it was certainly as seminal. But, unlike Shakespeare, Eisenstein was more than the leading practitioner of his art; he was also its principal theorist."

This 2,000-page journey through the mind of a genius mirrors the history of the Soviet Union, starting off in a spirit of experimentation and genuine optimism, all of which was progressively stifled as Stalin increased his stranglehold on the party. In other words, Eisenstein's innovative writings up to 1934 exude enthusiasm, while those from then onwards are more cautious.

The greatest shock comes in 1937 with Eisenstein's apology for his "transgressions" in making Bezhin Meadow, 60 per cent of which had been shot before it was cancelled on official orders. "Speeches by our Mosfilm collective of workers . . . saved me from the worst . . . [it] helped open my eyes above all to my own mistakes in my socio-political conduct." A number of other pieces, which could have been written by the Ministry of Propaganda, are just as depressing.

Nevertheless, there are some wonderfully enlightening pages among the later writings: his notes on his production of Die Walküre for the Bolshoi at the time of the Nazi-Soviet pact; his thoughts on the parallels between Charles Dickens and D W Griffith; his admiration for John Ford's Young Mr Lincoln (Lincoln is compared with Gorky); an analysis of his work with Prokofiev on Ivan the Terrible. But for the greatest stimulation one must turn not to the dazzling but fragmentary memoirs, Beyond The Stars, or to Towards A Theory Of Montage, an indispensable book for film-makers and film students (rather too technical for the general reader), but to the earliest volume, in which Eisenstein's theories are almost as intoxicating as the films themselves. Here you will discover an analysis of how the effects in Battleship Potemkin were achieved, and an argument for a vertical "phallic" screen which could show "Gothic cathedrals, the Paramount building in New York, Primo Carnera, the profound and abysmal canyons of Wall Street in all their expressiveness — shots available to the cheapest magazine, yet banished for 30 years from the screen".

Karl Marx wrote: "The bourgeoisie created the world in its own image. Comrades, we must destroy that image." Eisenstein, in his writings and films, led the storming of the palaces of bourgeois culture, only to find himself continually trampled underfoot in the manner of his beloved Charlie Chaplin. But the eccentric polymath with the mischievous simian features, big head and stocky body always retained his irreverent sense of humour, and the dream of creating "an unheard-of form of cinema which inculcates the Revolution into the general history of culture, creating a synthesis of science, art and militant class consciousness".

Love is not all we need

Jenny Turner

Mavis Belfrage: A Romantic Novel, with Five Shorter Tales
by Alasdair Gray
Bloomsbury 159pp £13.99

READERS ought by now to know what Alasdair Gray means by "a trouser suit". As in "She stood with right hand in the pocket of a trouser suit", which is what Mavis Belfrage does when she first visits the hero in his office in the title story to this book. Trouser suits, as readers will remember from Something Leather and 1982 Janine, are one of Gray's topmost turn-on fashion items, along with front-buttoning midi-skirts and jeans and dungarees. Fashion has not been seen so freshly — or so fetishistically — since Aldous Huxley went wild with his zipper fastenings in Brave New World.

Gray has advertised Mavis Belfrage as "a romantic novel", and, on his self-penned jacket flap, as "Gray's only straight novel about love". Sure enough, Mavis Belfrage itself does indeed feature a lonely, undersexed man, and an assertive, trouser-suited woman, and all the sorts of consequences readers who know about trouser suits will be primed to expect.

The greater drama of the collection as a whole, however, doesn't concern men and women in their erotic configurations only. In Mavis Belfrage, our hero is a teacher-training college lecturer, who has lost all passion for his subject after going "to a famous south British university where he won a fairly good second-class philosophy degree". In another it's a retired headmaster; in yet another, a woman who looks like a schoolmistress is seen as the supreme object of desire.

Schoolteachers, of course, have long been a favourite emblem of Scottish literature, from Muriel Spark's Miss Brodie to the excruciating trials of James Kelman's Patrick Doyle. And Gray for his part has longer enjoyed anatomising such emblems. So the greater drama of Mavis Belfrage, in a way, is all about the role of the state education system, back in the days when "state education" had not yet become a synonym for "cut".

Gray, unsurprisingly, is good at wringing humour and pathos from the stock figure of the schoolteacher, worn and thwarted, eccentric to the point of barking mad. But he also demands we see the ridiculous creature in his historical context, as drone and functionary to the postwar welfare consensus, as a major contributor to the labours of what Gray calls "Britain's lowest professional class".

Although he is often mistakenly thought of as a postmodern writer, Gray has an imagination that is profoundly classical at root. Democratic institutions thrill him just as much as do trouser suits, be they ever so flawed. And this is the great thing about all Gray's writing. It encourages us to thrill to what is both good and terrible about our own political history and aspirations. Humans, he unfashionably seems to be suggesting, need a sense of a *polis* just as much as they need romantic love.

Eleven years ago now, in the portmanteau collection he shared with James Kelman and Agnes Owens Gray served notice that he was about to give up writing. "Having beguiled with fiction until I had none left I resorted to facts, which also ran out" — that's the entire text of "Ending", his final contribution to 1985's Lean Tales.

Ever since, Gray's writing has always felt wonderfully loose and provisional, like drafts of an ongoing work-in-progress, or like Green Papers presented to an intellectually active public by the genuinely experimental government we're never going to have.

GRAY is as at ease with his seriousness as he is with the profound silliness of his chosen erotic kink. Pretty well alone among contemporary writers, he can afford to let his writing go places where — you get the feeling — it ends up surprising even the author himself.

Mavis Belfrage comes complete with illustrations, marginal subheads, an epilogue to one tale detailing its diverse sources, and a tearful Goodbye on the second-to-final page. Gray's chosen typeface, the title-page informs us, is Zapf Humanist. And there's a gnomic little foetus-woman proclaiming INDEPENDENCE on the very last page of all. She isn't wearing a trouser suit. But she does have her hand on an apple, and a curiously come-hither expression to her eye.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

A Time to Keep, and Other Stories, by George Mackay Brown (Flamingo Modern Classics, £5.99)

FIRST published in 1969, this collection is a great introduction to Mackay Brown's artistry, control, depth and humour. The stories — all of them set in Orkney — range in time from the Viking raids to the present day; what is perhaps most remarkable is the way he can weave, from the sparse and stark details of Orcadian life, narratives of great human richness. The themes are generally our weakness in the face of the powers of rain, wind, sea, strong drink and religion; the simplicity and pace of their telling suggest the eternal techniques of story-telling (told with the kind of snap and twist that is designed to keep a pub audience enthralled). A writer at once timeless and contemporary.

The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam, by Barbara Tuchman (Papermac, £13)

THROUGHOUT history, governments have been gripped by the desire to institute policies which have been obviously and severely contrary to their own interests. From the wooden horse to the folly of Vietnam, Tuchman presents us with a spine-chilling procession of official stupidity. A copy should be sent to every world leader today.

The Village Pub, by Roger Protz and Homer Sykes (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £8.99)

NICE pictures of the nicest country pubs in England (conveniently depopulated for the snaps), with text by one of Camra's leading lights. This is more than beer-bore coffee-tablery: dedicated to George Orwell, it is a sustained *laudate* to the finest institution this country has ever produced. Buy this book, and drink yourself silly in every single one of the inns herein.

The Tortilla Curtain, by T Coraghessan Boyle (Bloomsbury, £5.99)

A HYPOCRITICAL liberal Californian and a stupefyingly poor illegal immigrant's destinies collide, and although our sympathies are pretty well flagged in advance, Boyle does a fine job in keeping us turning the pages. Important if you want to understand America, too.

Permanent Midnight, by Jerry Stahl (Abacus, £6.99)

MUCH-HYPED Drug Hell memoir in which Stahl comes clean about years of narcotic self-abuse while writing for the hit American TV show Thirtysomething. Relentless low self-esteem (he will often as not say "I slimed" where you or I would say "I went") mixed with the chippy take-it-or-leave-it tone of Narcoporn. Highly readable if there aren't too many drugs books already.

Avarice in wonderland

The reality of the health system in America is so awful that it had to be fictionalised. Joan Brady talks to **Nicholas Wroe**

THEORY Of War, Joan Brady's 1993 Whitbread prize-winning novel, was widely regarded as being the "true" story of how her grandfather was sold into slavery as a four-year-old white boy in post-civil war America. In fact the book is almost entirely fictional. Brady recalls how she was even criticised in her native America for an over-reliance on her grandfather's diaries.

Yet while in one respect that book was masquerading as a personal story, in another sense it really was the product of a tragic family event. The last draft, which imbued the book with such passion and anger as to elevate the unknown Brady to the head of an eminent Whitbread shortlist, was written in the immediate wake of the death of her husband.

In her latest novel, Death Comes For Peter Pan (Secker & Warburg, £15.99), she explicitly uses this material in detailing his treatment at the hands of the American medical system and his subsequent death from a degenerative disease.

Sitting in the garden of the Devon home where she has lived for 30 years, Brady is charming and relaxed. With her spare frame and short grey hair she is a fit-looking 59 and exhibits little of the intensity so apparent in her writing. Despite her long residency in this country she still feels an outsider. "I don't have the subtleties of English speech yet," she says.

Showing little British reserve she talks easily about her husband, the novelist Dexter Masters, and how she took him back to America in the latter stages of his illness.

"I ran into this situation I was wholly unprepared for," she says. "Legislation had been quietly implemented in 1983, the consequences of which were terrifying." She calmly explained to me a system in which every disease — even Brain Disease (Unspecified) — has a specific cost attached to its treatment.



Health hazard . . . Brady tackles hospital corruption PHOTO: TIM CUFF

So when the money has been spent, it is the private hospital which made the diagnosis that pays any additional costs, not the government or the insurance company.

"When there are people who are very sick, as my husband was," she explains, "the hospitals want to get rid of them. From the hospital's point of view, after you are diagnosed, the best thing that can happen is that you drop dead at once. What you're left with is a big incentive for corruption."

This corruption is most evident in post-hospital nursing homes where minimal care ("they compete with Burger King for staff") is combined with hugely inflated prices. Brady's initial response to this system was to write a factual exposé, but after two years of research she was flatly rejected by American publishers.

She was, however, by this time ready to write the story as a novel.

Citing Dickens, Steinbeck and Upton Sinclair, she set about creating a coherent fiction while not changing "a single administrative detail, medical diagnosis or legal implication". Her delivery of the transition from fact to fiction is for the most part secure.

The exposure of the crazy economic and moral universe of the Medicare system is convincingly contained within an intriguing and moving family saga. Peter Kessler is dying and his young wife, Alice, is faced with negotiating a way through the bureaucratic, financial and emotional maze.

Brady's writing, drawing on her own experience about the agony of a loved one mentally and physically drifting away, is almost unbearably poignant. "Americans are so afraid of death that they would rather someone else dealt with it for them." She laughs — "You may be 90 and have worked hard all your life, but the attitude is, if you tried harder, you'd still be 18."

There is little of this gallows humour in the book, although it is by no means relentlessly depressing either. The main literary conceit is the weaving into the Kesslers' story of elements of Peter Pan and Alice In Wonderland. "Peter Pan is described in the original as being as delicate as a butterfly and as dangerous as a bomb," says Brady. "I thought what a marvellous character." The idea of Medicare as Wonderland — inverted logic and lots of maths — came from an American academic. Both strands invest a strangely mythic atmosphere into the narrative and make even more unsettling the unreality of the medical system.

Knopf, the American publisher, offered $100,000 for Death Comes For Peter Pan and Brady was assigned the same editor as Cormac McCarthy and Richard Ford. This was a very big advance for Brady and she recalls being thrilled when Sonny Mehta, the doyen of New York publishers, "put his arm around my shoulders and said, 'Is there anything I can do for you Joan?'" However, four months of silence followed before Knopf decided to withdraw.

Coming after the relative failure of Theory Of War in the US — Brady expected more support from her publisher, "as the first American to win a major British prize" — the problems with her latest book leave her perplexed. "I don't really believe in conspiracy theories," she muses, "but it makes you wonder. These are multinational corporations, more powerful than some governments. Hospitals are just part of what they do. All the way in this I've come up against the money. It's terrifying how much is at stake."

While Brady is keen to campaign on this issue — the book is dedicated to Hillary Clinton "who did her damndest to help"; she fears the increase in American-owned hospitals in this country — she doesn't see herself as exclusively a political writer. She is currently a hundred pages into her next novel — set in Britain, the United States and Russia — and claims "there are no social issues in it", before pausing to add "yet. So far as I'm aware".

The metaphor made flesh

Tim Radford

In the Blood: God, Genes and Destiny
by Steve Jones
HarperCollins 302pp £20

STEVE JONES has written The Story Of O. And also of A, not to mention B and even AB. He has girdled the globe in pursuit of haemoglobin. The University College London geneticist and snail expert first delivered the Reith lectures, which drew huge attention, and then wrote the book The Language of the Genes, which drew even more, and is still doing so. The message of both lectures and book was that life was a four-letter word: the letters A, G, C and T being symbols for four nucleotides that are all that is needed to write the DNA blueprint for yeast cells and yaks, peccaries and people.

The book was a prize-winner and a best-seller. The author became a columnist, a broadcaster, a media don. He also joined the tiny platoon of scientists to be seen at literary lunches and literature festivals, courted by agents, consulted by novelists. He had an advisory hand in the making of A S Byatt's latest novel Babel Tower. A television series was inevitable, and a book of the series too. This is that book. Professor Jones observed once that he only did this sort of thing because he couldn't get the money to get on with studying snails. Good news for some: The book is another winner.

The new biology — see Richard Dawkins and his Selfish Gene, Blind Watchmaker and Mt Improbable — keeps yielding bold metaphors. Old metaphors too: toss genes and evolution into the pot and you have Original Sin again, this time as an inheritance mechanism that makes your attention deficit disorder, or your violent anger, inevitable. This is an argument you might even try to produce in court.

There are biologists who believe that, at bottom, science will have the answer for everything: Jones is not one of them. There are genetic differences between populations in Detroit and Darlington, but they don't explain the difference in murder rates. The number of guns in each city is enough to do that. Technology, he says, matters more than biology. Jones makes his journey through history and landscape, from Armageddon to Great Zimbabwe, from Albi's Cathar cathedral to Zaire and Zion, from Hirohito to the Hottentots, from the Mormons of Utah to John Major and Baroness Thatcher (who share a common ancestor and a joint fifth cousin, who writes country and western songs). He deals with understandings and misunderstandings about genes and genealogy, the tougher science hived off into read-me-later modules so as not to interrupt the narrative.

Along the way, the imagery keeps taking over; aristocrats reproduce their wealth and titles asexually; ordinary mortals go in for sex and dissipate their inheritance. Taxes do the same thing. The difference matters to the Pequot Indians of Connecticut who have discovered that tribal land is now a casino money-spinner. If they keep the money in the tribal families, they lose the idea of tribe. Jones is great on sex and death and taxes.

Oh, and talking of aristocrats and social climbing, a species of slug gives up sex with higher altitudes: at the top of a Derbyshire dale they are all black and identical. You have to go downhill for richness and variety and sexual activity. There's a metaphor for somebody to pick up.

Bridge Zia Mahmood

I TIMED a recent visit to Florida, the Sunshine State, impeccably, for I arrived at the same time as a freak thunderstorm, which lasted for two days. The good news was that a friend invited me to his home for a bridge match. There were three regular partnerships and two odd men out, myself and someone I'd never played with before. Our system discussion was brief. "Stayman, Blackwood, everything else standard," I said, and partner readily agreed. I would soon regret not having used more precise terminology. A few hands into the match, I picked up these cards:

♠AQ9 ♥KJ953 ♦K10 ♣J84

I opened one heart, and partner responded three spades. East, one of those who is always looking for an edge, smiled at me and passed. I could understand why he was smiling. The natural interpretation of three spades is a weak hand with a long spade suit.

But my partner might well believe that the "standard" interpretation prevailed. A common expert treatment in the US is to play a jump to three spades as a splinter bid — heart support, a singleton or void in spades. I was now in a real dilemma. My partner had either one spade or seven, and I did not know which! Silently, I cursed myself for not having been more specific in what I'd said before the game started. We should have agreed to play "everything natural" rather than "everything standard".

Eventually, I hedged my bets with 3NT; if partner had long spades this might not be a disaster, while if he had short spades he could correct to four hearts. The latter proved to be the case — but partner, feeling that he had already shown his hand, passed my 3NT and put down this pleasing dummy after West had led a spade:

♠K ♥AQ108 ♦QJ65 ♣10976

As you can see, 3NT has nine easy tricks while four hearts has four top losers on a minor-suit lead. East, whose hand had been:

♠J108654 ♥4 ♦A4 ♣K532

now piped up, "You didn't alert your partner's bid of three spades." The standard practice in expert play is that when your partner makes an unusual bid, you should "alert" your opponents, who may ask you what partner's bid means. This is to protect your opponents against agreements that are not natural.

"I couldn't alert three spades, as we did not have an agreement about what it meant," I replied, honestly. But East was not satisfied. "If I'd known that three spades was a splinter bid," he said, "I'd have doubled it to show spades. Now we could find our sacrifice in four spades against your four hearts, and we lose only 300 instead of 620. I suggest we re-deal the hand."

Now, it was obvious to me that East had been hoping for us to have a misunderstanding and end in a ridiculous contract. If that had happened, of course, he would never have asked for a re-deal. But when we reached the best contract after all, he was unhappy and decided to object. Technically, he was just about within his rights, and as it was a social game I agreed to a re-deal. Inwardly, though, I was seething. Next week, I'll tell you about our revenge.

● A while ago, I asked readers to let me know the odds that a bridge hand would contain all four aces. I received a staggering number of replies, almost all of them correct — the odds are 4,154 to 11, or about once in every 377.6 hands.

Clare Harris of Bristol's answer came out of the hat first, and a small prize is on its way to her. ©



ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

The fat of the land

Mark Cocker

AS A LANDSCAPE Halvergate has few rivals in England. One heads east out of the village from which the area takes its name and suddenly, almost disconcertingly, the familiar pattern of Norfolk ploughland, with its pockets of oak wood and encircling hedge, falls away completely. Ahead, as far as the eye can see, is a vast expanse of level pasture at times more reminiscent of the sea than the land.

To walk in this place, the largest area of grazing marsh in eastern England, is to be forced to adapt to a different scale and perspective. Halvergate's occupied buildings can be counted on the fingers of one hand, and there are no roads, nor vehicles. Nor are there trees or hedges, the fields being divided by a lattice-work of flower-rich dykes. The one significant feature to orient oneself in the sea of green is an occasional tall cylinder of brick — the crumbling remains of an old windmill. Herds of grazing cattle can seem to loom on the horizon like passing ships, while a line of old slub dumped after dyke-dredging operations erupts out of the absolute flatness like a miniature range of hills.

With only the tumbling song of lapwings to break the silence and the lollop of scarpering hares to distract the eye, no other landscape in the region can offer such an atmosphere of peace to the visitor. Yet, ironically, for many environmentalists the name of Halvergate still resonates with deep conflict. In the 1980s it became a major battleground for those with deeply opposed views on the future usage of landscapes which, like Halvergate, were aesthetically and environmentally rewarding, but economically unproductive.

On one side, the bigger, more profitable farmers and their allies in the Ministry of Agriculture seemed to have all the forces of established tradition with them. British farming had been on a long march towards efficiency since the 1940s, becoming one of the most successful in the world. The intensification of Halvergate and the conversion of relatively unproductive grazing land to arable, seemed just one more step in the drive towards greater profitability.

While the environmentalists seemed to be swimming against the tide of this recent history, they marshalled the forces of reason with devastating impact. What was the point, ran one important argument, of paying farmers large subsidies to convert relatively unsuitable land to cereal production, when a European grain mountain already stood at over 600,000 tonnes?

The dispute was eventually resolved and Halvergate's farmers did receive subsidies, but not to drain and plough their ancient pastures. Payments were made for its retention under traditional farming practices. The outcome was heralded as a perfect compromise, but many saw it as a great victory for conservation. In fact, the scheme of compensatory payments developed at Halvergate evolved into the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme — a system that now helps safeguard 22 of England's most beautiful, wildlife-rich landscapes, involving a total of 426,000 hectares.

However, looking at the great herds of cattle floating across Halvergate's ocean of green, I can't help reflecting on one final irony that seems more significant in view of the current beef crisis. There are many people, especially amongst the conservation movement, who consider rearing animals for the table as unacceptably cruel and view the widening of their own vegetarian diet as a moral crusade.

Yet if everyone had believed meat was murder, then Halvergate, its great drifting herds, its nationally important dyke flora, its populations of breeding waders and wintering wildfowl would all have disappeared long ago.

Quick crossword no. 316

Across

1 Sash (10)
7 Marsupial (8)
8 Change (4)
9 Compassion (4)
10 Cup (7)
12 Pegasus in Greek mythology (6,5)
14 Meagre flow (7)
16 Discharge (4)
19 Fluent and insincere (4)
20 Moisture in the atmosphere (8)
21 Noticeability (10)

Down

1 Fastening or embrace (5)
2 Measure of explosive power (7)
3 Nobleman (4)
4 Confused noise or uproar (8)
5 Umbilicus (5)
6 Day nursery for babies (6)
11 Breed of terrier (8)
12 Sing like a bird (6)
13 Month of fasting (7)
15 Tree trunk, as tossed (5)
17 Name (of newspaper) (5)
18 Portent (4)

Last week's solution

W	A	L	L	S	H	A	V	E	E	A	R	S
H		E		A		W		A		R		H
O	V	A		S	O	N	G	C	Y	C	L	E
O		R		H		I		H		H		R
P	I	N	E	C	O	N	E		L	I	M	B
		E		O		G		F		T		E
W	A	D	E	R	S		P	A	R	E	N	T
H		F		D		A		N		C		
A	C	R	E		E	C	S	T	A	T	I	C
T		I		T		R		A		U		H
F	L	E	S	H	P	O	T	S		R	Y	E
O		N		E		S		I		A		S
R	I	D	I	N	G	S	T	A	B	L	E	S

Chess Leonard Barden

JUDIT POLGAR, featured in last week's article, took another step towards the world top when she reached the semi-finals of the PCA speed chess Grand Prix at the Kremlin, Moscow. The 19-year-old Hungarian defeated the world No 5, Ivanchuk, before losing to Kramnik, who went on to beat Garry Kasparov in the final.

Fide's Karpov v Kamsky world title match will now start in Kalmykia on June 5, but these days reputations increasingly depend on the Fide and PCA ranking lists, where Polgar is already in the top 10. Her victory over Ivanchuk, who has recently scored several impressive tournament victories, was thus a symbolic landmark. Kramnik and Anand are now the only top GMs who normally beat Polgar, while she has not played Kasparov since their controversial game at Linares 1994, where television monitors showed that the world champion took back a move before winning.

Polgar-Ivanchuk, Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 The Kan system, a topical choice: Winning With The Kan is the title of a new Batsford book by Ali Mortazavi.

5 Bd3 Bc5 6 Nb3 Ba7 7 Nc3 Nc6 8 0-0 Nf6 9 Qe2 d6 10 Kh1 b5 11 f4 Qc7 12 Bd2 0-0 13 Rae1 Bb7 14 Rf3. Trademark Polgar. More than any other leading grandmaster, bar Kasparov, she tries to create early K-side piece attacks with the white pieces in almost any opening.

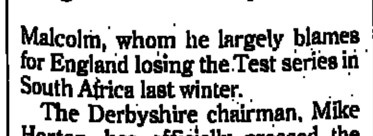
At one time, critics claimed that her game was too tactical and would fail against the best strategists. Results don't support this argument, and Polgar has almost a 100-per-cent record against Nigel Short, as well as improving results against Karpov, her victim in last week's game.

Nd4 15 Nxd4 Bxd4 16 Rg3 Nd7? Missing a tactic which ultimately wins the game. Better is b4. **17 Bxb5! Nc5** If axb5 18 Nxb5 Qb6 19 Nxd4 Qxd4 20 Bc3 and 21 Rxg7+ wins.

18 Bd3 Rfe8 19 Nd1 f5 20 Bc3 Bxc3 21 Nxc3 fxe4 22 Nxe4 Bxe4 23 Bxe4 Rab8 24 b3 d5 25 Bd3 Qxf4? Ivanchuk is eager to regain the pawn, but this one is poisoned. 25 . . . a5 and dour defence is the best chance.

26 Rf1 Nxd3 Despair. If Qc7 27 Bxh7+! Kxh7 28 Qh5+ Kg8 29 Rh3 with unavoidable mate. **27 Rxf4 Nxf4 28 Qg4 Ng6 29 h4 Rb7 30 h5 Nf8 31 e4!** To undermine the defensive fortress, create mobile passed pawns. **h6 32 c5 Rc8 33 b4 a5 34 a3 Rc6 35 Qd4 axb4 36 axb4 Rbc7 37 Kh2 Rb7 38 b5 Rcc7 39 Qb4 e5 40 b6 Rc8 41 Qb5 Rcb8 42 c6 Rxb6 43 Qxd5+ Kh8 44 Qxc5 Resigns.**

No 2423



White mates in three moves, by D Gilmour, 1895. Just a modest puzzle by an unknown composer, but it recently defeated a problem editor for half an hour. Can you do better?

No 2422: 1 Rh6. If Kf5 2 Bf3 Kf4 3 Rf6. If Kg4 2 Be4 Kf4 3 Rh4.

Rugby Bath 44 Wigan 19

A fit tribute to Wigan in happy reunion

Frank Keating at Twickenham

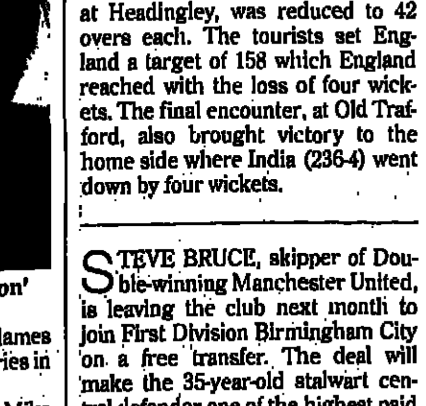
THE century-old walls finally came tumbling down on Saturday and 42,000 were there to see it. Wigan's aggregate advantage over the two battles of English champions was 101 points to 50, and 19 tries to eight, but neither side was gloating or wailing as things ended in the spirit of a happy family reunion.

Other than to write an important page in the history books the main significance of these occasions was to demonstrate that full-timers are likely to be better — ie, fitter — than part-timers.

In the continuing glow of reconciliation afterwards the convivial consensus was that once Bath led by 39-0 after three-quarters of an hour they took their foot off the accelerator and cruised downhill for the rest of the way.

"We could have stuck the ball up our jumpers but we didn't want to," said Bath's director of rugby John Hall. "We wanted it to flow, so we just took our foot off the gas pedal."

This was true for almost an hour but it was also true that Bath were so exhausted in the last half-hour that they could scarcely return that foot to the pedal to find out if anything was left in the tank.



Brotherly shove . . . Sleightholme, a scorer for Bath, hands off Tuigamala, a scorer for Wigan, at Twickenham PHOTO: RICHARD SAKER

"We were knackered and really struggling by the time they came back at us," admitted Andy Robinson after Wigan's two late, length-of-the-field tries, but by then the damage had been done.

Bath took only a few minutes to twig that the majority of Wigan's sleek superstars had no clue about line-out, scrummaging and rolling mauls. Declining penalty-pots and missing conversions, Bath threw the ball around with such abandon that it was no wonder they were whacked with a fair chunk of the match remaining.

The ball was in play for 40 minutes of the 80, whereas the average for Bath's Courage League matches this season was 23.

"The two games have been a revelation in fitness," said Hall. "Wigan's players have four sessions a day at the club, plus personal conditioning, while we are still amateurs because of the limited time we can afford to put into training."

However, all Bath players last weekend put in a splendid performance, Sleightholme's left-wing try a particular fizzer in overdrive.

Sleightholme's try came just after the half-hour and was Bath's third, coming after a penalty try — of which there might have been more against Wigan — and a close-quarter dart by Adebayo. During this period Wigan could scarcely lay hand on ball. Adebayo made it 25-0 before half-time and cool-hand Catt, who revelled in the day, Ian Sanders and De Glanville scored three more tries.

The Va'aiga Tuigamala try and Craig Murdock's two sumptuous long-distance scores at the end made the point for fitness and sent supporters of both allegiances to the bars and picnic car-parks to celebrate a famous armistice and set a date on a complete merger. We shall see.

Merger is the talk of both codes

Robert Armstrong at Twickenham

BATH's successful tête-à-tête with Wigan has intensified predictions that the two rugby codes will merge, and sooner rather than later. Maurice Lindsay, chief executive of the Rugby Football League, forecast "a unified code within five years" and the RFU secretary Tony Hallett agreed that "in the long term it will be difficult for them not to merge".

"We don't see each other as rivals but rather as friends and supporters," said Hallett, who added that the Bath-Wigan game had been "all to the good of both codes".

Hallett also spoke of a renaissance in rugby which could lead to the Rugby League Challenge Cup final being staged at Twickenham. "I would like to see the Rugby League Cup final played here — it would be a privilege and an excitement," he said.

Lindsay welcomed this, citing "difficulties with the FA over Wembley", and both Wigan's coach Graeme West and assistant coach Joe Lydon were enthusiastic about Twickenham as a rugby league venue.

The Wigan captain Shaun Edwards went further, citing Twickenham and its "fantastic atmosphere" as ideal for rugby league Test and World Cup matches.

Edwards, who won England schoolboy caps at union, would even return to the game if a suitable contract came along. "I am ready to listen to offers," he said.

Lindsay and Lydon expressed some anxiety about the potential drain of league professionals into union now that amateurism had disappeared, but Bath's director of rugby John Hall welcomed it.

"If Wigan players become available we would want to talk about it," he said. "In future Bath will be run as a professional club. Our players will train harder and will be significantly fitter."

The cross-code experiment netted over £1 million in gate receipts from the two games and might be repeated or even expanded next year.

"I don't think we should abandon the idea," says Lindsay, who praised Hallett for initiating a dialogue between league and union where none had previously existed.

"The players from both clubs have a lot of respect for each other and almost 70,000 people watched the games and enjoyed them. We could explore ways of developing this kind of contact, possibly with four teams involved next time around."

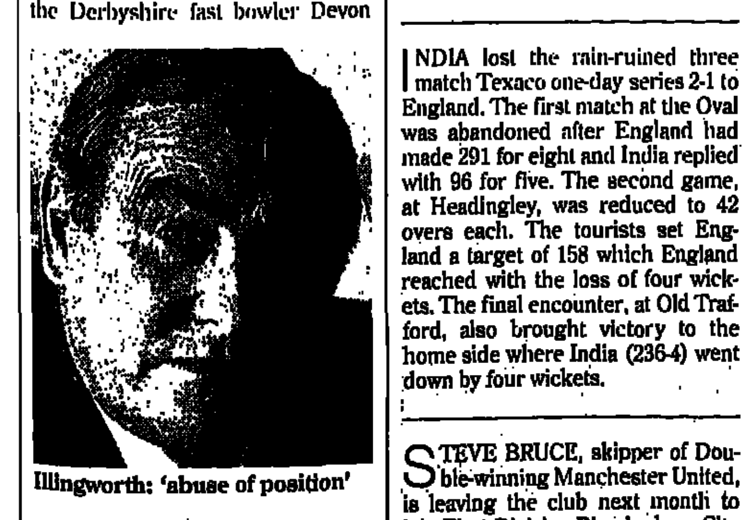
The Bath coach Brian Ashton was similarly keen. "I'd like to see more of these matches so long as we're involved," he said. "We learn so much from them. It was an opportunity to test ourselves against some of the best rugby players in the world. Our players certainly got a great deal out of it."

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Illingworth on a sticky wicket

RAY ILLINGWORTH, chairman of the England selectors, is finding out what it means to publish and be damned. He faces the prospect of disciplinary action over his book, One Man Committee, which comes out later this month but was serialised by a national newspaper in Britain last week. It has upset a number of people in the game.

In the book, Illingworth has repeated and clarified his criticism of the Derbyshire fast bowler Devon Malcolm, whom he largely blames for England losing the Test series in South Africa last winter.



Illingworth: 'abuse of position'

The Derbyshire chairman, Mike Horton, has officially pressed the Test and County Cricket Board's disciplinary committee to take "strong action" against Illingworth. Horton, in Miami on business, described Illingworth's attack on Malcolm as "an abuse of his position and a decision taken purely on commercial grounds".

When disagreements flared between the chairman of the selectors and Malcolm in South Africa, Horton chose not to become involved, but now he has decided to defend his pace bowler. "A player is being attacked in print by the man responsible for picking the England team and that can't be right," he said.

Lancashire have added their voice to the criticism. They are understood to be upset at references in the book to their county and England captain, Michael Atherton, and believe the comments are in breach of the board's regulations.

INDIA lost the rain-ruined three match Texaco one-day series 2-1 to England. The first match at the Oval was abandoned after England had made 291 for eight and India replied with 96 for five. The second game, at Headingley, was reduced to 42 overs each. The tourists set England a target of 158 which England reached with the loss of four wickets. The final encounter, at Old Trafford, also brought victory to the home side where India (236-4) went down by four wickets.

STEVE BRUCE, skipper of Double-winning Manchester United, is leaving the club next month to join First Division Birmingham City on a free transfer. The deal will make the 35-year-old stalwart central defender one of the highest paid players in English football. He is believed to have been offered a two-year package worth nearly £18,000 a week. Bruce is Trevor Francis's first major signing since taking over at St Andrews.

Also on the move are Serie A stars Gianluca Vialli and Paulo Futre. Vialli, the 31-year-old striker who is still savouring the European Cup triumph with Juventus, has joined Chelsea on a two-year contract. It is understood Vialli will earn £1 million a season for teaming up with his friend Ruud Gullit, Chelsea's player-manager.

Futre is expected to receive more than £1 million a season in a two-year deal at West Ham. However, he played only one game for Milan last season because of a knee injury.

Meanwhile, Gary Speed has agreed to join Everton from Leeds. A life-long supporter of the Merseyside club, the 26-year-old midfielder will complete a £3.5 million transfer when he returns from his honeymoon later this month.

TEENAGER Philip Neville and his brother Gary, teammates at Manchester United, earned themselves a niche in soccer history when they played for England against China last week. Not since Jack and Bobby Charlton appeared together for the last time against Czechoslovkia in Guadalajara in the 1970 World Cup have two brothers played in the same England team.

A GOAL by Steve Claridge in the dying seconds of extra time won Leicester promotion from Division One at Wembley on Monday. He fired the ball home from the edge of the area to stun Crystal Palace just as the match looked set to go into a penalty shootout. Palace had opened the scoring after 13 minutes through Andy Roberts but Garry Parker's 76th minute penalty conversion sent the play-off into extra time.

In the Second Division play-off final, Bradord City beat Notts County 2-0. The Third Division play-off final was won by Plymouth Argyle, who defeated Darlington by the only goal of the match.

ITALIAN Costantino Rocca took advantage of a late slip by US Masters champion Nick Faldo to win the Volvo PGA title at Wentworth on Monday. Just when it looked as though Faldo was timing his challenge for a record fifth victory in the event to perfection, he opened the door and Rocca stepped right in, to win his first major for three years.

WITH less than two months to go before the Atlanta Olympics, David Whitaker has resigned as Great Britain's hockey coach. The official reason is that his business has grown enormously and he feels unable to give the coaching the attention it requires. Richard Dodds, chairman of the GB Men's Olympic Hockey Committee, said Whitaker wanted to resign after the team qualified at Barcelona in January but was persuaded to stay on. Whitaker, aged 47, was awarded an OBE after coaching Britain's gold medal winners in 1988.

THE world motor cycling champion Michael Doohan won the 500cc Italian Grand Prix on a Honda at Mugello to strengthen his position at the top of the standings. Earlier, during a warm-up session, Australian sidecar rider Shane Souter broke a leg and suffered head and chest injuries when his bike was sliced in half in a crash.

FIRST it was mad cow disease and now the public is being warned of the dangers of "mad couch disease". Doctors believe that it could rage for two months as Euro 96, Wimbledon and the Olympics hit the small screen. The medics say that high consumption of alcohol and junk food, coupled with lack of exercise, could result in weight gain and increase the risk of heart disease.